



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

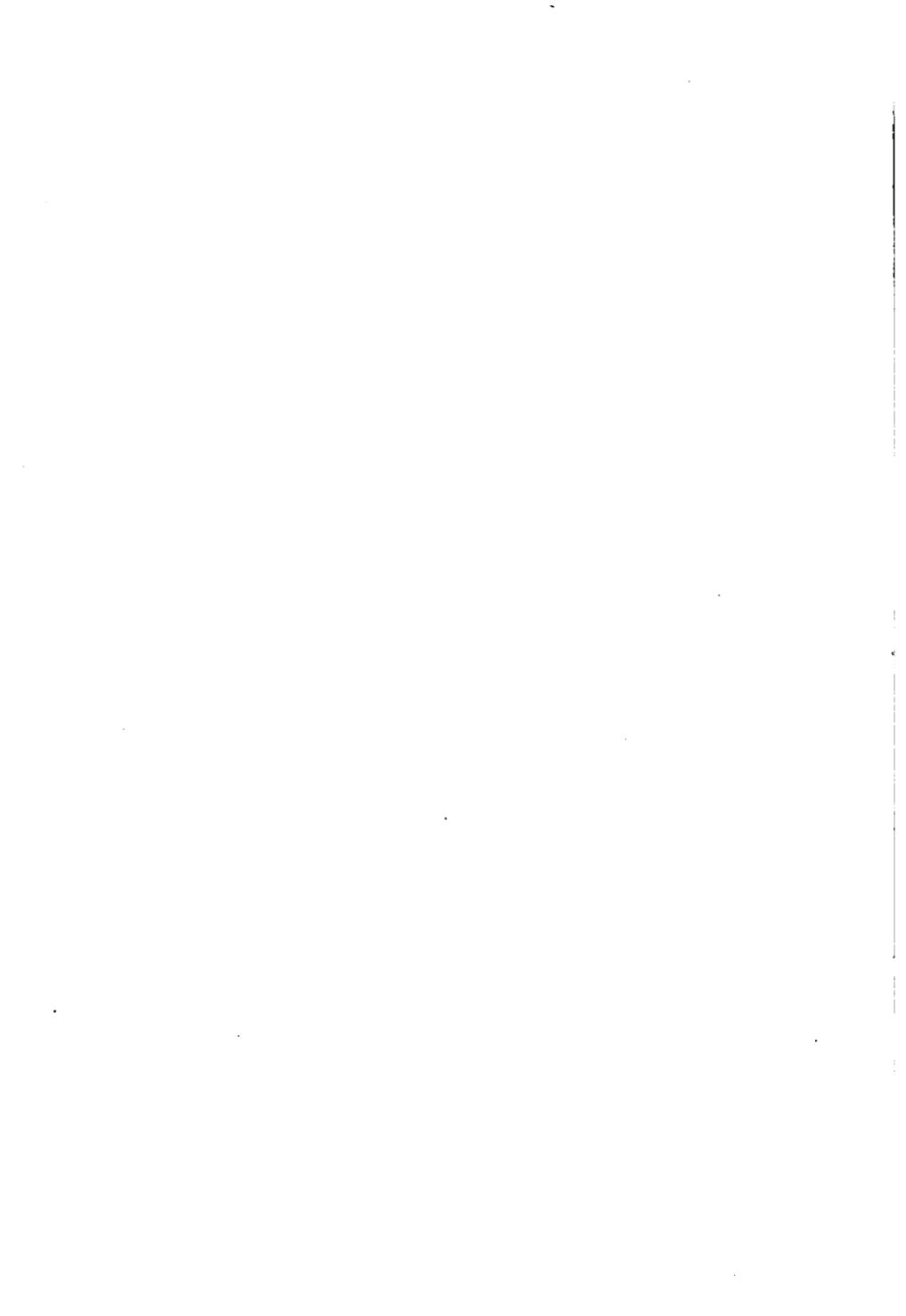
About Google Book Search

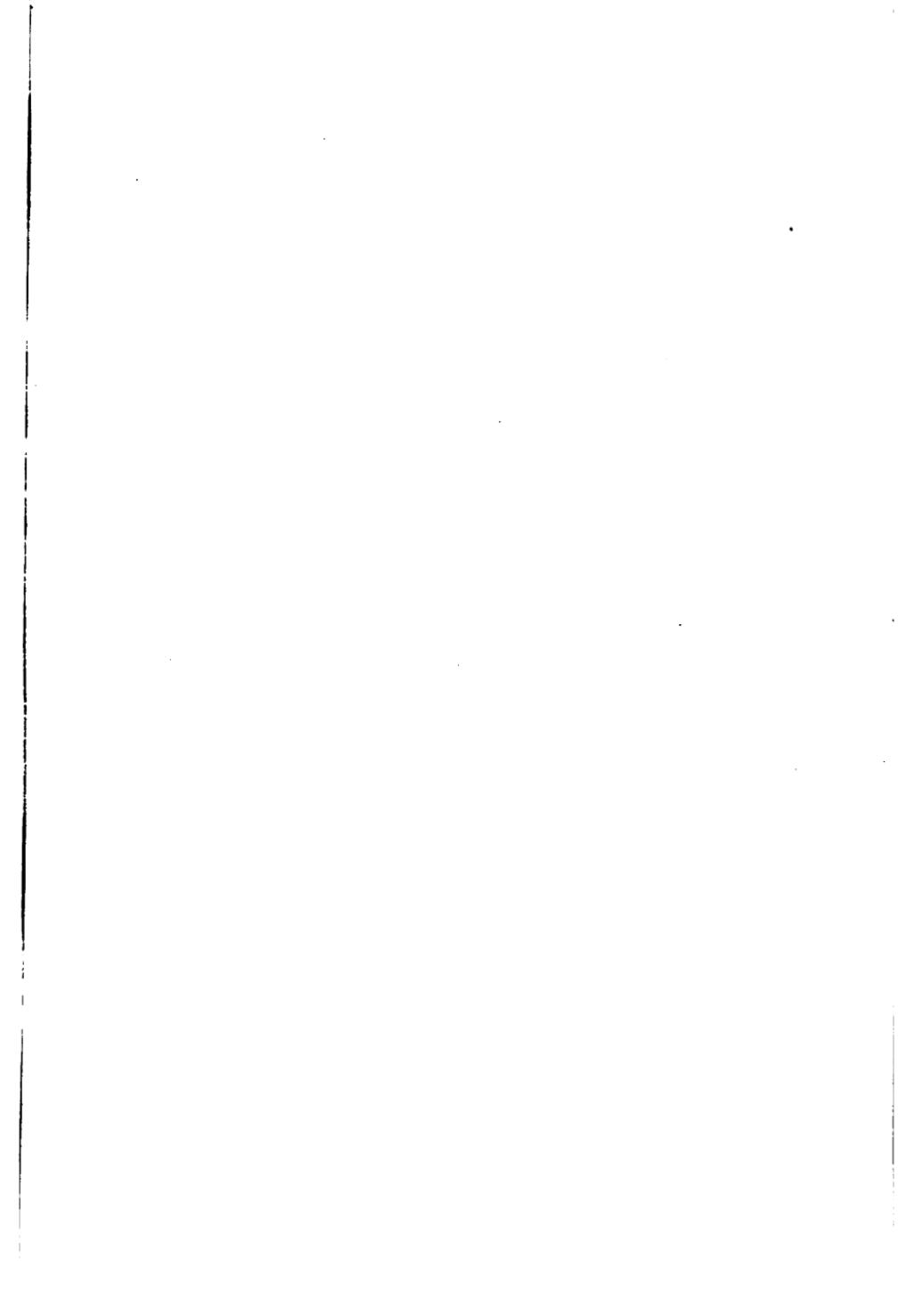
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

M·AGNES KELLY

KD12415









A DAUGHTER OF LIBERTY.

M. A. C.

PUBLISHER

151

ELGIN AVENUE

London

NEW YORK

137 MADISON



A DAUGHTER OF THE FATHER

HIS REBEL SWEETHEART

BY

M. AGNES KELLY

THE
Abbey Press

PUBLISHERS

114

FIFTH AVENUE

London

NEW YORK

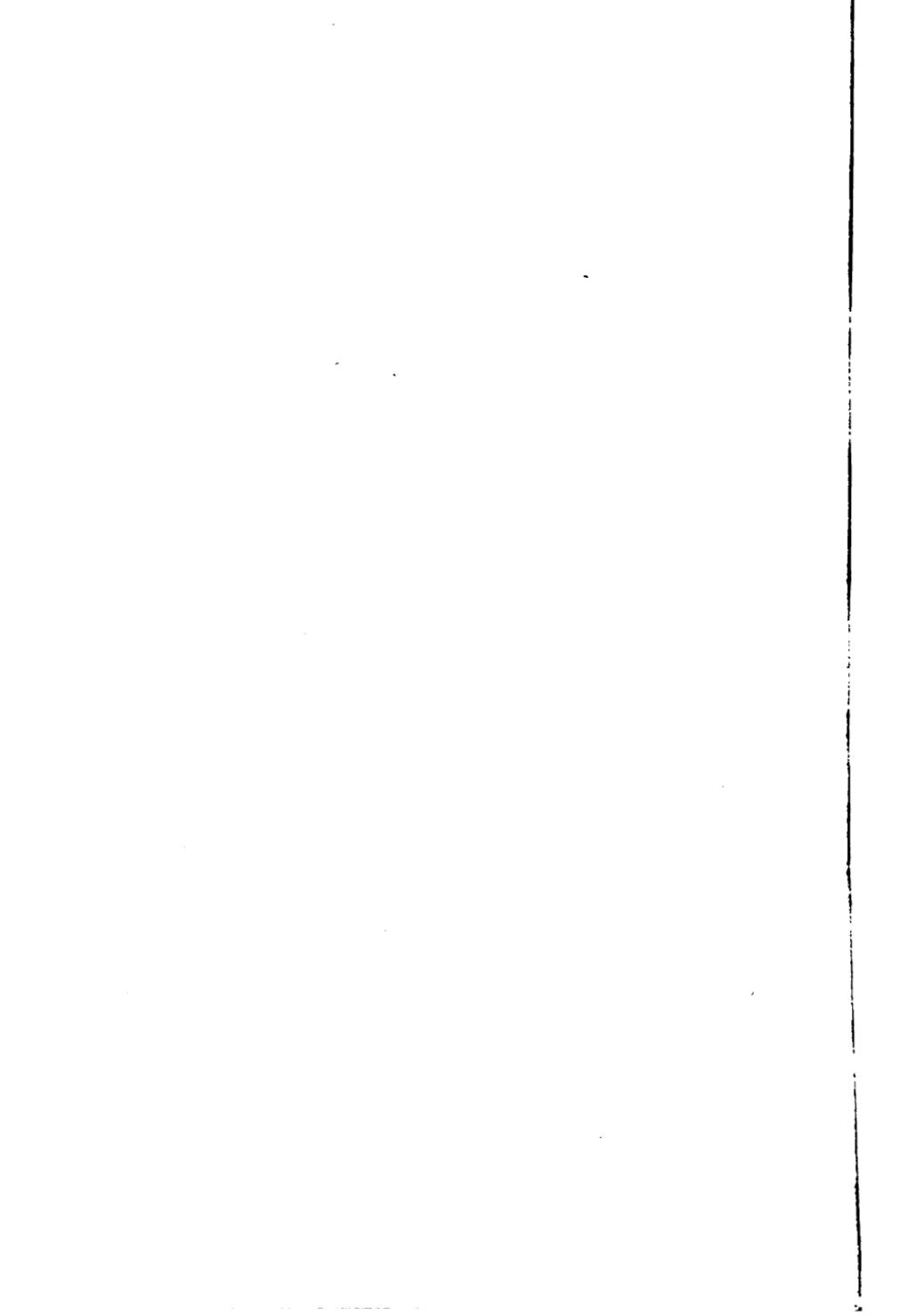
Montreal

KD12415



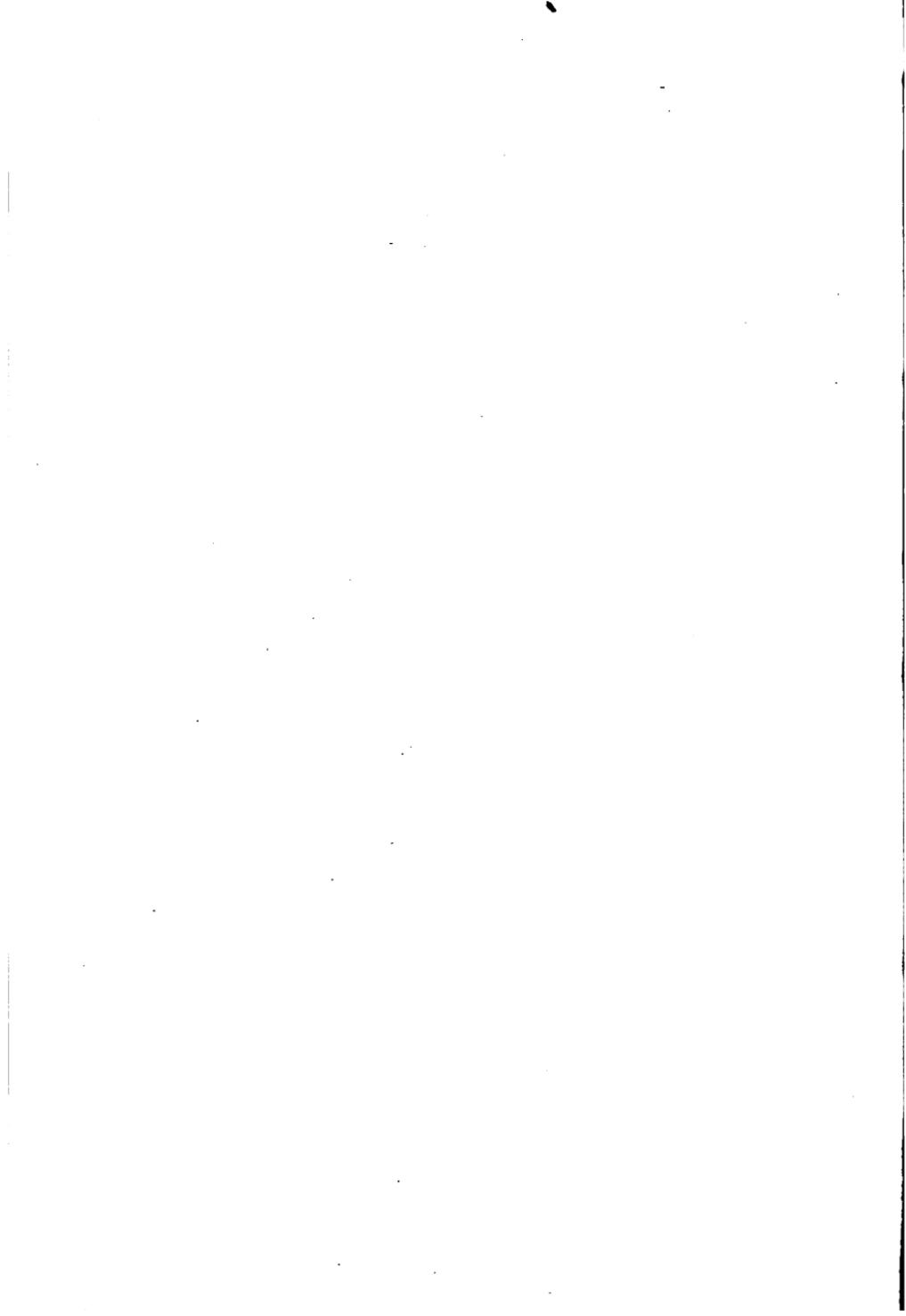
Copyright, 1902,
by
THE
Abbey Press

DEDICATED
TO
F. B. K.
AND
F. V. K.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	PAGE
The Son of a Tory and the Daughter of a Patriot...	1
CHAPTER II.	PAGE
Her Explanation and His Apology.....	12
CHAPTER III.	PAGE
The Result of the Great Meeting in the Fields.....	25
CHAPTER IV.	PAGE
Three Men and a Girl.....	50
CHAPTER V.	PAGE
An English Officer and a Half-witted Soldier.....	67
CHAPTER VI.	PAGE
An Introduction to Lieut. Andrew Fletcher.....	79
CHAPTER VII.	PAGE
One Capture and Two Escapes.....	88
CHAPTER VIII.	PAGE
Helene's Rescue.....	99
CHAPTER IX.	PAGE
De Lancey Again on the Scene.....	127
CHAPTER X.	PAGE
A Loyalist Visitor for a Rebel Prisoner.....	135
CHAPTER XI.	PAGE
The Reconciliation.....	141
CHAPTER XII.	PAGE
One Week Later.....	157



HIS REBEL SWEETHEART.

CHAPTER I.

THE SON OF A TORY AND THE DAUGHTER OF A PATRIOT.

OLD JOHN NORRIS was known throughout the length and breadth of New Jersey State, his adopted land, as one of the most loyal of King George's subjects. Young John Norris was known throughout the length and breadth of Paulus Hook, his birthplace, as an ardent advocate of freedom. Consequently, as the months of 1773, pregnant with an awful menace, passed away; frequent and stormy waxed the debates, political, economical and social, between father and son on the Norris homestead.

Early one bright, crisp morning in April, 1774, after a particularly heated interview with his father, the younger Norris climbed into his heavy

wagon and started for New York. His thick knitted brows, black with the unextinguished fire of his late passion, prevented any friendly interruption from the few foot passengers he chanced to meet. He drove along quickly, snapping the whip viciously in the air every few moments. It did not take him long to transact his business, but instead of going directly homeward he turned toward the Common. A crowd was already gathered. He produced a stout rope and, fastening his horses to a tree some distance away, pressed nearer. As he did so, the speaker descended from his roughly improvised platform of logs, and John caught his eye.

“I am sorry,” he began, “I just missed what you said.”

“Are you a Son of Liberty, sir?” The old man eyed him keenly.

“Because I am its Father. Before they were, was I; and after them will I still be; not in the substance, perchance, but the ethereal part of my being will live forever, and live here on this very soil, for the spirit of liberty is like fire on a prairie, unquenchable and resistless. It goeth on and on. Its sons—they spring up like the armed men of— My metaphor may be mixed, young man, and my rhetoric none of the best, but my ideas shall never perish, for they are founded on God’s

The Son of a Tory.

3

eternal Word and, as Sophocles says, "Truth is always the strongest argument.' " Then, suddenly changing his tone:

"Are you a Son of Liberty? You have not replied to my question."

"You have hardly given me time," answered John, smiling calmly upon the strange old advocate of freedom, whose dress and demeanor seemed to indicate a noble type of manhood. "I am not, but——"

"Then you should be," he interrupted, and the young man bit his lips. "War is in the wind now. It is coming across the seas. There's no alternative. It's war! war! war!" and his voice raised itself to a pitch of startling intensity. "Do you know what war means? It means that my little girl here will have no father, and that some other maid will have no lover. War will come. War must come. And who shall fire the first shot, you or I? For the right hand of the Lord is with us. He will sustain us." Here his trembling voice fell from a shriek to an almost inaudible whisper.

John glanced from the man's quivering form to the erect figure beside him. Such a contrast! The one tall, but old and bent; fiery, but weak and tottering and thin to emaciation, with the signet of death on his ashy cheeks and an almost fanati-

cal energy of gesture and speech. The girl, young and plump and rosy, standing motionless, uttering no word, vouchsafing neither a smile to her father nor a blush to the stranger, a statue save for the restless roving of a pair of fine dark eyes. The young man was dimly conscious of a peculiar fascination lurking beneath her sweeping lashes, but he thanked the Lord mentally that Mary was the sort of girl who liked to stay at home. This was no place for maidens. The old man with his skinny hand and glittering eye reminded John of the Ancient Mariner.

“Who may you be, young man?” he kindly asked. “I see you are from the country.” That statement conveyed no disrespect in those days.

“John Norris of Paulus Hook,” he answered not without a blush. The old man screwed up one eye while the girl flashed him a quick, comprehensive glance.

“Like father, like son, eh?” questioned the former, sharply.

“No, sir,” was the ready response. “I’m disgusted with North and his tribe.” The old man still looked distrustful. Then, much to John’s amazement, the daughter spoke.

“Papa, why don’t you trust him? The father may be John Norris, of England, but the son is John Norris of America. Are you not?” Where

was her stolidity of manner now? She seemed transformed and the young countryman did not approve of sudden transformations. "Mama was Helene de Varnée of Paris, but I am Helene de Varnée Rockwood of New York. I'll stay here and help to fight here if need be. Nay, look not so cross, *mon père*, I'll not go back to France if the war breaks out. I'm not a coward. I couldn't fight perhaps, but I could sew and nurse and do—oh, scores of things, couldn't I, Mr. Norris?"

Now truth was a cardinal virtue with John, and fine speeches to pert young damsels were not in his line. The only girl he knew well, was Mary, a distant cousin of his father's, who lived with them at home, and she wore her skirt long and her hair high. This young maiden with her mass of curls and absolute fearlessness of his altitude and ancestors rather shook the corner-stone of his edifice of propriety. So he replied courteously but stiffly that he hoped there would not be occasion for girls to rough it while the men and matrons were willing and anxious to do their part. She smiled a funny little smile that made his finger tips itch to give her a smart box on her little pink ears. This he could hardly do, so he contented himself with a well-pronounced frown. The aged orator was hardly to his liking, but

6 His Rebel Sweetheart.

he was nearly three times John's own age, so his infirmities were pitied and his opinions respected. Furthermore, he was a true patriot, and that, in itself, covered a multitude of sins in the eyes of the young fellow. But the girl! He turned to look reprovingly at her as she spoke:

"Perchance you may require my services some time, Captain Norris," and she mocked him with a sweeping curtsy.

"I hope not," was his polite reply.

"You might wish nice woolen mittens to cover your fingers, mayhap. Let us take the measure," and she looked at his hands.

"Twould take a deal of yarn in-sooth. Would you like them pink or blue?"

"Green," he snapped. "I go gloveless because I choose to, and not from necessity. My father has good lands and money."

"And is a good Tory——"

"He is better than some that are not——"

"As good as he," she finished, laughing. "That is an axiom, sir."

"In my village, young maids are taught silence in the presence of their——"

"Superiors," interrupted she. "So they are here, sir. 'Tis a rule that I strictly adhere to."

The Son of a Tory.

7

A reply was framing itself in John's slower brain, but Helene's father spoke.

"Like other true patriots, you two children,—" and he looked from one to the other. John's face turned scarlet while the girl tapped her boot on the ground. "You both prove disloyal to your cause by petty bickerings. 'Tis mostly your fault, daughter; your over-fondness for teasing a poor lad may bring harm on your own shoulders. Tell me, young man, do you stop in New York over night?"

"I don't know," he replied, hesitatingly.

"'Twere better so. Come with me and put up at Fraunces' Tavern, on Broad Street. Alexander McDougall is going to speak there to-night." This name was sufficient inducement for Norris so he gave them both a ride in his wagon. But he took no further notice of Helene, nor she apparently of him. However, he somehow felt conscious of her glance even while he knew it was elsewhere.

As John drove up Pearl Street, and stopped for the first time in front of the little, three-storied coffee-house, with its walls of Holland brick and its peak roof, he became aware of an unwonted excitement. Evidently Mr. Rockwood was a man of some importance here, for the crowd pushed forward to greet him. How John envied

him ! He noticed also, that Helene came in for a share of the attention ; and, while it seemed respectful, he could not refrain from looking the disapproval he felt. She glanced at him, half timidly, half triumphantly, and then disappeared, leaving the young fellow to eat a hearty meal in peace. After this Rockwood and he took their pipes and tobacco and mingled with the throng in the Long Room. Here John saw the familiar figure of "King Sears," whom he had met before at Drake's Tavern on the dock. Talking with him was a man dressed in homespun blue.

"That's John Lamb. His father was Jack Sheppard's accomplice—you remember the story?" whispered the old man in his ear.

"He's reformed now, and this young fellow's an honest, straightforward lad. He went with Montgomery to Quebec, was wounded there and captured. You recollect he did so much to repeal the Stamp Act. He's coming to the front again. Like every true American he's denouncing this infamous tea business. The Boston boys are clever youngsters. By the way, did you hear that the 'Nancy' had landed? She's at Sandy Hook. A pilot told the captain about her movements and he came into New York minus his 'Nancy.' But, by Heaven, she won't land. Not if I have to swim out and blow her up!"

"Well said, Mr. Rockwood. Come and have some Rombo; rum's better than tea just now," said a man at his elbow, and, turning around, John found himself face to face with Marinus Willett, a well-built man about thirty-five years of age, whose face was scarred and whose manners were bluff. He afterwards learned that the scars had been purchased under Abercrombie and Brad-dock, while he had still been in his teens. All the evening the young countryman passed as one in a dream. He remembered that almost nine years before many of these men here now with him had met in the self-same room and leagued together un-der the glorious title of "Sons of Liberty." They had done a little, there was much yet to be done. And nine years hence, where would they all be? It was a conundrum too difficult for Pitt and Chat-ham in England; for Franklin and Jefferson here; so John, being a plain New Jersey farmer gave it up.

His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of three fellows named Scott. They were wild-ly excited. Calling together McDougall, Sears and Lamb they held a whispered consultation in one corner. John was curious. He caught the words, "Nancy," "harbor," "to-morrow." Sears looked up, and, to his surprise, beckoned to him. With three enormous strides he reached him,

leaving his victims to pick themselves up. Sears frowned.

"I meant Marinus Willett. He was talking to you." Crestfallen, John started back. Willett only smiled.

"They want you. If anything's on hand let me in on it, will you, sir?"

"Come with me, then. I need you to walk over these heads, you know," but John understood and looked his gratitude. He soon discovered the cause. The "Nancy" had not landed but a merchant vessel had stolen in with eighteen chests of tea concealed. They were plotting to destroy it.

Losing no time, they started down to the harbor a short distance away. John felt his blood tingle. On they went until they reached the vessel. There they quickly overpowered the few men on board and imitating the example of their Boston compatriots cast the contents into the sea. Then they advised the captain and the commander of the "Nancy" to leave. As they drew off at the foot of Broad Street, in small boats, each for his respective vessel, a multitude gathered on the shore. Farewells were shouted, and cannons fired in the fields, shaking all the buildings in the city. Then the men hastened back. John, carried away by enthusiasm, yelled:

"Let's raise the flagpole," and the mighty shout went up.

"Three cheers for John Norris, of Paulus Hook," cried a shrill voice, which he recognized as Mr. Rockwood's, but which was lost in the general confusion.

"John Norris, of Paulus Hook, is an old Tory," called a voice somewhere in the rear. John turned to see James De Lancey, an old schoolmate, walking beside Helene. Although the tones did not sound familiar, John concluded that it was De Lancey who had tried to diminish his triumph.

"But the son isn't!" sounded a girl's voice. Then, "Three cheers for John Norris, Jr., of Paulus Hook!" this time clear and sweet and thrilling. From mouth to mouth passed the inspiring huzza. John felt elated. His young blood flowed tempestuously. With the other leaders he was borne back in state to Fraunces'. But many an evening following as he blew out his candle he could not prevent a feeling of humiliation from rising in his breast, when he considered that the most pleasurable sensation of that night he owed to Rockwood's daughter.



CHAPTER II.

HER EXPLANATION AND HIS APOLOGY.

HE met her a couple of months later in the Fields, which is now City Hall Park, in the borough of Manhattan, New York City. Thither he had gone with a piece of secret information which he had hoped to give Marinus Willett. Although he admitted to himself his dislike for the girl, still he was glad to see her, for she was in constant communication with the men whom he wished most to know intimately.

“Bon jour, garçon,” said she, by way of greeting.

“I don’t know French, Miss Helene,” he answered, as he raised his cap. He thought by calling her thus to make her appreciate his own seniority. She divined his wish.

“Tis well for me you don’t,” laughed she. “For I just called you ‘boy’—and that’s all you are, too,” as her dark eyes, large and mirthful,

Her Explanation—His Apology. 13

glanced from his head to his heels, "for all your six feet odd. You're a monstrously big fellow," and a touch of pride quivered through John's stalwart frame, for he was man enough to feel her admiration. "What a fine soldier you'll make! Oh, I wish I were a man!" John looked at her in dismay. Change those dimples and roses for scowls and bristles! Perish the thought! Thinking thus, he spoke:

"Don't wish that. You're far nicer as you are." She opened her eyes wide and laughed in glee.

"Well, that's a fair compliment, in truth, Master John. You needn't *take* it back, and I shan't *give* it to you, sir. You called me Miss Helene. I have no older sister, and others call me Miss Rockwood. You're not much older than I. How old are you?" Such impertinence was not to be brooked. Why had he been guilty of so foolish a falsehood?

"I'm old enough to be a man," he replied, haughtily.

"So am I old enough," she laughed, "but it doesn't follow that I *am* one. I'll never repeat that wish in your hearing. You wouldn't say anything civil to me again. You're sorry you said what you did. I think I'll have to teach you French, sir. That is the language of courtiers and lovers." She tapped her boots, which were

outrageously small, with a twig which she had broken from a bush hard by.

"I'm neither courtier nor lover," he exclaimed, roughly, "and you're a—a—" But she was near him now, looking into his eyes. How could he say what he wanted to, without committing perjury?

"You're a witch," he answered, gravely

"Oh, that's not so bad. But don't pronounce my doom with so solemn a countenance, sirrah. Smile, if you please. We'll have enough to mourn over soon," and her dimpled face altered in a second. Then it lighted. "Addison says, 'Man is the merriest species in the creation; all above and below him are serious.' Now, are you above—or below?" and her sparkling eyes met his.

"Below," he replied quickly, "if I stay here very long, I fear," and he moved a step nearer.

"Fie! What an ungallant speech, Mr. Norris. Thou shalt be taught French, after all. I must get thee a good teacher."

"Teach me yourself, then." Was this John Norris, and did he move closer yet?

"Nay, I said a *good* teacher. Thou sayest I make thee *bad*. I am glad you hold yourself straight—you have improved since I saw you last. Didst get over thy triumph? I thought those idolaters wouldst make thee a calf—a golden calf, I mean.

Her Explanation—His Apology. 15

Mille pardons, monsieur. And what didst thy Tory father say? I heard that he took thee unduly to task."

"Yes, James De Lancey, your friend, your countryman,—"

"All Americans are my countrymen," she interrupted testily.

"Well, a Frenchman, then, or a descendant of one," he went on. "He told some men all about it—he knew it would reach father's ears—not that I cared."

"No, so it appears," she commented, dryly. "What would you say if I told you that Mr. De Lancey would have kept it quiet only I told him not to."

"De Lancey would do anything to harm me, that I know. We're old foes, but you—well, I wouldn't be surprised. There's malice in you, too." She stamped her foot.

"I shall do something to hurt you for that. You're an insulting country clown. Perhaps you'll learn how to treat a lady some day."

"I've had but few dealings with fine ladies," quoth he, "but my ideal lady is not one who associates with men and—"

"No, my ideal lady," she interposed, angrily, "is one who associates with gentlemen, consequently I must say farewell to you now. Perhaps some

future day, if I cease to be a lady, or you, by some strange metamorphosis, transform yourself into a gentleman, I'll hold further converse with you." She drew herself up to the full height of her petite, well-moulded figure, and walked indignantly away. He was a little ashamed of himself and a good bit vexed with her, as he watched her disappear.

"There! I intended to ask for Mr. Willett. I'm a fool. Wasted my time, got her mad; 'tis easy enough that, though, to be sure; lost my own temper, not so hard a task either, and accomplished naught. I wish—" But his soliloquy was broken into by a soft voice at his elbow.

"Are you still angry?" And to his utter amazement there stood the girl whom he had just seen vanish in the opposite direction.

"For the Lord's sake, where did you spring from?"

"Why don't you say 'fall' instead of 'spring'? It would imply a more celestial abiding-place. Well, Mr. Norris, you see it's this way: I'm not a lady," there was a shade of bitterness in the tone, "but just a sort of human spider; my eyes are everywhere—like my tongue," and she laughed. "I saw your face looked sorry and I watched you from—my web up in the tree, in a balloon, in the sky, it makes no difference where.

Her Explanation—His Apology. 17

So I came to tell you if you're truly sorry, why, I am. I shouldn't have called you a clown, anyway." The dimples were there, the white teeth shone, and John caught the rounded rosy curve of her cheek. He was very human after all.

"I take it all back," he relented, "you're the dearest little patriot I know."

"I don't want you to say that. I want you to say I'm a lady."

"Well, you're a lady," he repeated, obediently.

"And you're sorry you said I wasn't."

"And I'm sorry I said you weren't."

"And you'll never say so again," and she shook her curls almost in his face.

"And I'll never—" he put out his hands, but she was yards away. Back she came smiling.

"Now, you didn't come here to see me, did you?"

"No, but—"

"You must be very diligent, sir, no dilatory boys around. Why, here, sir," with a dramatic gesture, "is the spot where Leiser was hanged long, long ago because he was a republican; and here, nearly ten years ago, when Colden was Governor, the Sons of Liberty burned his effigy for refusing to give up the stamps. And right well did he deserve it. That was the time they paraded the streets with the banner inscribed: 'Eng-

land's Folly and America's Ruin.' You were a mere boy then," she added, maliciously.

"And you in your cradle! Methinks gray hairs come early to the daughters of France."

"I'm a Daughter of Liberty," she cried. "I'm a spark of flame from the Chariot of Freedom. Dost that sound unlike papa?" she laughed. "Dear old daddy! He's a good father and a fine old scholar, but sometimes I fear," and two big tears glistened, "that this excitement is turning his brain. I tried at first to keep him out of it, he's so nervous; but he sent me away to my aunt. I don't like her so I ran away and came back to him, and I'll never leave him now. That's why I'm always with him and that's why I'm no lady."

John uncovered his head. "Pray forgive me."

"Nay, my fine gentleman, say no more. Here comes your old friend, James De Lancey. I must go to him. Whom did you come to see? Oh, Mr. Willett! He's a nice man, isn't he? He was to be here to-day. Go to my father, over there," indicating with her finger, "he knows where he is. And have a care what you say in the vicinity of *mon père*. I'm never far away. You must come to the Fields again. There's going to be a big meeting July sixth."

After having obtained John's none too reluctant

Her Explanation—His Apology. 19

promise she tripped away in the direction of De Lancey. Norris made his way over to Mr. Rockwood. As he did so, he concluded that he disliked the old man's daughter less than heretofore.

The people of the colonies at this time were divided into three classes. Those called the Tribunes, composed mostly of mechanics, who were vehement in their denunciations of the condition of affairs then existing; the statesmen and rulers, known as the Patricians, who, while they saw and acknowledged the wrongs inflicted, were more conservative and still hoped for an amicable settlement of difficulties; and again those who, from various motives, some good, some selfish, could or would find no serious cause for complaint. To these last belonged the elder Norris, and it pained him bitterly to see his heir and only child, motherless now for many years, turn from the teachings of boyhood and throw himself at white heat into the coming struggle. Nor were neighbors lacking to keep him informed as to John's movements. Not once had the young fellow gone to a meeting, delivered a message, or talked with an enthusiast for the new cause that, sooner or later, it did not reach his father's ears. So he determined to come to the city himself in the future and leave to his son the less perilous rounds of home duties. John understood the manoeuvre

and resolved to apparently submit gracefully for a time, but he determined that the sixth of July would see him in New York despite all obstacles. Fortunately for John, his father became slightly ill early in July. John strenuously insisted upon calling a physician. Mary, whose word was sacred within the household, demurred; and Mr. Norris declared it was only "a mad idea in a madman's brain." He was as well as any one. However, a day later, he was unable to leave his bed. This was John's opportunity, so he called Mary into the family sitting-room that evening. They had been companions and playmates since childhood. She had never known any other father or mother than John's. As she entered she noticed his stalwart frame and broad shoulders as he stood looking out of a window. He was tapping on one of the numerous small panes, but turned, hearing her light step on the threshold. She smiled. Her face with its pale complexion and classic aristocratic features had hitherto implied naught but gentleness and womanliness. But the smiles transformed it into that of a saint. Her smiles were rare and only for intimate and fortunate friends. An erring man might be withheld, or a ruined one reclaimed by smiles such as these. Something of this thought came to John, simple,

Her Explanation—His Apology. 21

country fellow though he was, and he looked into her eyes with an answering smile in his own.

“Mary, I am going to New York to-morrow for a doctor,” he began.

“Why, John, do you think father so ill?” and there was a trace of anxiety in her voice.

“Er—no—perhaps not, but it’s best to be certain, isn’t it?”

“I suppose so, but he’s so headstrong, he’ll resent it. And, John, you are like him,” and she laid a large, white, well-shaped hand upon his coat-sleeve.

“John,” and her liquid tones grew tender, “you have concealed many things from me of late. Why? Didn’t you think I was trustworthy?” and her calm blue eyes met his glance. “Have I ever done aught to displease you?”

He blushed a little. “No, Mary, you’ve not, but—oh, I can’t explain.”

“You’ve been troubled and I should have liked often to have helped you, John, as I used to long ago. Do you remember? I was one year older then, and seemed three; now, I’m still one year older, I suppose, but seem, oh, thirteen younger, according to your late mode of thinking. Are your new friends so much better than the old?”

He frowned slightly and looked injured. “No one else will ever be to me what you have been

—and still are,” he added, as an after-thought. Mary’s ears, however, were keen. “But everything is different now, Mary. Our quiet life is broken into, as you know. Now, even your tact cannot preserve a semblance of the old friendship between my father and me—and you take his side.” A shade of reproach was discernible now.

“No, John, I do not. You know my heart is with you, though my head may be elsewhere. I do think you rush into this, as you do into all else, with the energy and vitality of your restless nature. And I am fearful,—fearful of results. I don’t think there’ll be any war worth mentioning but I do think some heads will pay the penalty for this recklessness, and, John, I shouldn’t want this to be one,” and her hand touched his hair for a moment.

“Nothing will happen to me while I’ve you to worry your bright tresses gray and fall on your knees at the slightest provocation, Mary, my girl,” he laughed, as he slipped his arm around her waist. “I’ve always wished I had a brother,” he mused, “but I never felt the pressing need of a sister. The reason isn’t far to seek, is it?” A faint tinge of pink, like the forerunner of the dawn, rested momentarily on either cheek, and a look, wistful and yearning, came into her beautiful eyes. Her lips moved but no sound came. She looked

Her Explanation—His Apology. 23

at him slowly, smiled gently, and moved thoughtfully away. After an inward debate, she spoke:

“John, why are you going to New York to-morrow?” He started but made no reply.

“John, there is to be a meeting in the Fields.” He looked at her in surprise. “Father doesn’t know yet,” she said, in answer to his unspoken question. “But when will you be home?”

“I don’t know. I’ll send Dr. Merritt up the first thing.”

“Father will be angry when he hears you’ve attended it. John, why do you go?”

“Father’s displeasure counts for little now,” he exclaimed impatiently. “The hour has come for me to be tied to no one’s apron strings.”

She felt the rebuke, but said lightly:

“Is father a smithy that he wears aprons?” Then, curiosity overcoming prudence, she queried, “So your love of country is the sole reason why you go?”

“Yes,” answered John, truthfully.

“A little bird whispered there was yet another reason.” Mary’s eyes sought his, but the look of undisguised astonishment that she encountered made her ashamed.

“John,” she laid her hand on his shoulder, “rebel or loyalist, remember that whatever you do,

I shall ever be the same." Then, turning abruptly, she left the room.

He looked long at the door after she had closed it. Then he sighed.

"How strange!" he murmured. "Every one changes. Father is so different, and now Mary! I cannot understand her." Was John Norris the first man who admitted that he could not comprehend the woman with whom he had lived for years?

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULT OF THE GREAT MEETING IN THE FIELDS.

THE day following, John found himself one of an immense throng, assembled at what has since been known as the Great Meeting in the Fields. Boston's port had been closed to commerce by an order from England. The committee of Fifty-one, composed of merchants and gentry, had hesitated about entering into another non-importation league. John transacted his business, and, finding the meeting called for six o'clock in the evening, arrived some hours earlier, hoping to see Willett or even Rockwood. Seeing Rockwood meant seeing his daughter, of course. But no friend could be found. Great crowds drifted hither and thither, excited and angry. New York had proved herself officially the only tepid one of the colonies. The great mass of the people were incensed at this public attitude taken by its committee.

Suddenly, a girlish-looking youth arose, slim

26 His Rebel Sweetheart.

and reserved, and, at first, a trifle shy, as if unaccustomed to address large numbers. But as he proceeded he lost himself, and his eloquence carried the mob by storm. His splendid delivery, his force and logic, sent a personal appeal to each individual among the audience. His matchless arguments, showing as they did a well-balanced mind, keen insight and exhaustive research, were unanswerable.

Every one marvelled. From mouth to mouth passed the query: "Who *is* he?"

An old, scholarly-looking man near John spoke: "He has a brilliant mind indeed."

"Do you know him?" asked John.

"Yes, I am one of his teachers. He goes now to King's College."

"What is his name, if I may ask?" questioned John in his politest tones.

"You will hear from him again, if I mistake not," answered the other. "His name is Alexander Hamilton."

Before his impassioned and unparalleled address John had imagined once that he caught a glimpse of Mistress Rockwood. The constantly increasing crowd made recognition impossible. Finally in the magnetism of Hamilton he forgot all else. As the murmuring hosts began to depart he heard a voice at his elbow:

Result of the Great Meeting. 27

"Well, Master John Norris, what say you to that? Call you not that rhetoric? And he scarce older than I! Now such an one—oh, I could love a man like that. Why are you not so?" He was not surprised either at her presence nor her tone.

"For the simple reason that I am no collegian, but a brainless country clown, and my friends must take me as they find me."

"They must, eh? 'Tis a vastly different mood from the usual, is it not?"

"Where's your father?" he queried abruptly.

"Somewhere," she answered truthfully. "Do you wish me to hunt the Fields for him?" pretending to go.

"Not if you lose me in the pursuit," replied John. "Where's De Lancey?"

"What a queer way you have of jerking out your thoughts, to be sure," she exclaimed. "They come into your brain like drops of hail on a pavement and bounce up again, striking one in the face. I don't know, but—" again starting to go, "I'll fetch him, if you choose."

"You consider yourself able to 'fetch' anything, don't you?"

"Now, oh! there's such a nice compliment you could pay me," and she stamped her foot; "but no! you say everything but what's nice."

"What might I say?" he smiled.

"Why, say that Mistress de Varnée Rockwood is very 'fetching,'" and she challenged him with a roguish look.

"Well, Mistress de Varnée Rockwood *is* very fetching," he replied, then added, "when she pleases to be."

"*Bête*," she ejaculated, laughing, "you did it to a turn—and then turned it. I shall never make you into a gallant."

"I pray the Lord you never shall," was his fervent prayer. At this juncture her father came to take her home. De Lancey was with him. He nodded to John, but the latter acknowledged his salute coldly, then turned, with a sudden change of manner, to give the old man a friendlier greeting.

The remainder of the summer went slowly by. When September came delegates from twelve of the colonies met in Philadelphia and formed the First Continental Congress. Through Willett and "King" Sears, John had met Jay and Duane, and the names of Low and Livingston, the other two delegates, were known to every man, woman and child in the colonies. Not without pride did John read aloud to Mary in his father's presence the words of William Pitt in British Parliament, concerning one of Jay's papers: "I must declare and

Result of the Great Meeting. 29

avow that in all my reading and study of history . . . for solidity and reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia." When John had repeated this to Helene, not omitting his father's glare and Mary's warning appeal, she had clapped her hands and cried:

"Bravo, Sir John! I may yet say of you what I did of young Mr. Hamilton. What was it I said of him? I declare I've forgotten."

And he had replied, gravely, "You said you might *love* such as he."

But the only satisfaction he then received was a "Oh, I could never have said that. You must have misunderstood me." And her listener concluded that he had not understood her, and probably should not for many days to come.

The strong tone adopted by this assembly thrilled John to the core. Never before had his patriotism seemed so ardent. When the copy of their proceeding had been sent to Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who was then in England, he felt that the crisis was coming and that able men would cope with the emergencies and exigencies as they would arise.

The winter months came and went, freighted

with many an ominous sign. Slowly but surely even the conservative element realized finally that the inevitable was near at hand. John felt it and was glad. His whole soul throbbed. The keen, cold air braced, penetrated, strengthened and invigorated his frame. He could work well, but chafed under suspense. Mary saw and noted, but made little comment. Hers was not a happy lot. But her sex, through the ages, have learned the lesson of silent endurance, and Mary's temperament was essentially and thoroughly feminine.

She had never known any other love so strong or abiding as her affection for John; now his distract manner chilled and hurt her beyond words, while at the same time his fascination increased. She acknowledged then for the first time that John was passing from boyhood to the estate of a man. He required some stimulus; he was growing. His father could see but one thing: his boy had become a rebel—a rebellious subject and a rebellious son. Mary admitted that he had some right on his side. John was often harsh and impatient. Had it not been for Mary's sweet, restraining gentleness, even the semblance of good will would have been thrust aside before strangers. Often her spinning wheel would lie idle while she would now wonder and regret when erstwhile she had planned and hoped. She saw, with her

Result of the Great Meeting. 31

clear insight, that had the possibility of war not arisen, John had now arrived at a time when he must be up and doing. "What would it have been?" she frequently asked herself as, with a pang, she realized that now she was not sufficient.

"Perhaps, after it is over," she would say, "he will come back wearied of the task and appreciate the rest—and me." For Mary did not undervalue herself. She knew, though she had not a farthing of her own, that her beauty and breeding, her accomplishments and disposition would always attract a certain number to her side. But she cared little for the admiration of the many. What she wished for and felt she was losing, was the love and loyalty of one.

This came to her suddenly one day in February, with an awful, startling intensity. Like so many other things in life that mean so much, it was, in itself, but a trifle. She was returning from a sick neighbor's. Mary's heart, naturally sympathetic, constantly prompted her to find and succor the needy. The soft whisper of gratitude still rang in her ears, as she turned her steps toward a little strip of woods that made a short cut to the Norris homestead. She was in a happier frame of mind than had been hers for many a day. "What if the times are troublous?" But she resolved not to allow such a thought to

spoil the sense of tranquillity in her soul. "John has been more considerate of late. Perhaps, after all, affairs will be amicably settled and then—" but the sound of voices came on the wind. She heard a girl's laugh, liquid and crystalline, and then, by the sharp quiver of pain, vague but none the less real, she recognized John's penetrating tones. His voice had always, even in childhood, exerted a peculiar influence over her. When she had been quite a little maid, she had startled her elders one day by saying that whenever John spoke she felt like crying and laughing at the same time. And, evidently, in its transition from treble to bass, the quality of his voice as far as she had been concerned, had remained the same. She listened to it that winter's day in the woods, as the cold air fanned her cheeks, and this was what she heard:

"It has seemed an endless time to me. I have waited and waited here in the cold just to see you."

"Indeed," came the reply, from the possessor of the laugh, "that's the prettiest speech you've ever made, but it sadly lacks originality. Think of something better." What manner of girl was this that spoke so flippantly? Was this the girl of whom James De Lancey talked so much?

Result of the Great Meeting. 33

"I should get something valuable for coming so far and delivering such a message."

"I wish you didn't have the message," he retaliated. "If that were the case, then I'd have the consoling thought that you really came to see me. But you don't care two straws. As for your fee, that is for you to state."

"Then I name—let us see—shall it be five pounds or, say a real, genuine lover-like kiss?" Mary gasped in astonishment. "I dare say you'd rather give the latter," the tempter went on, "though, perchance, it's more of an effort."

"Could such things be?" Mary wondered. "What would he reply?" She was answered.

"I would gladly give one for the other, Helene. Come, now, I'll give five pounds for one kiss. Oh, laugh if you please. I've never said that to a girl before." The poor eavesdropper shuddered. She believed it if this other girl did not. Then she heard again the softer tones.

"Nay, my good sir, I did but wish to see if Master John the Dignified were like other men. Ever the same, while we poor foolish maids—alas," and she broke off with a light laugh. "Please remember, Mr. Norris, that I am Mistress de Varneé Rockwood, in the employ of my country, because I love it and not because I love—others, and am paid not in pounds ster-

ling, nor pounds confectionery, nor with that nameless something far sweeter, even though the temptation may indeed be great and come from such as thee. Farewell!" and the next instant speaker and listener found themselves face to face. The cheeks of the one grew rosier, while those of the other paled till all the blood seemed to have forsaken them. Mary's eyes glanced further up the path, but John did not appear. Evidently he had taken a different route home. Neither of the two seemed to enjoy the situation; consequently, while neither had before seen the other, the feeling of dislike was mutual. Each tried to pretend indifference and each succeeded only indifferently well. Mary was heartsore, deeply disgusted and vexed. Helene was thrown off her guard, and, while more angry with herself than any one else, as usual, tried to shift the responsibility from her own shoulders to those nearest.

She tilted back her head, looked at and through Mary, and was about to pass on when she saw a convulsive movement of the latter's arm and noticed that she leaned against a tree for support.

"You are ill," she cried, impulsively. "Something has happened, maybe. Can I help? Why, you're whiter than a counterpane," and she took a step toward her. Then Mary spoke. Would John have recognized the tones?

Result of the Great Meeting. 35

"Don't touch me!" and she shrank away. "I couldn't bear it." There was no mistaking the intonation. She caught the look of pain in Helene's eyes, and her heart smote her. Gathering together all her forces, she said, nervously:

"Don't mind me. I'm better now. It was so warm—I mean cold, chilly, that I—"

"Yes, I understand," and Helene's words were not calculated to produce a rise in temperature, "the woods are damp and you've probably been in them some time." This brought the retort,

"I wish I had not come this way. I was just going home—I am Mr. Norris' ward, and—"

"I am very pleased to meet you," and the other bowed low. Mary flushed scarlet. She was too truthful by nature to dissemble, but the acknowledgement had cost her something. To have it cast back at her with this insult and from this girl was too much. As for Helene, her worst fears had been fulfilled, so she stopped not now to reckon the cost.

"There's an old adage 'twould have been well had you remembered in time," she remarked. "As for me, I never catch cold. I, too, often pause and listen. There are so many interesting and unusual things to hear in the forest." She laughed, but it sounded not like the ripple that had floated

on the breeze a few moments earlier. "Not even a dragon could frighten me," she boasted.

"I can readily believe you," commented Mary. "You would make a splendid spy. Perhaps your country may require such services ere long. I dare venture you would gladly serve your country in any capacity."

"Yes, but without pay, you must know. Now that's the lamentable part. I think, by all the gods in Olympus, I'll take pay the next time it's tendered, especially if my 'country' insists and pursues me for it." Her ringing laugh seemed to Mary demoniac.

"By the way, George III., God bless 'im and—er—Satan take him. No, there's no use for me to send him to Satan; that dear old sinner has him already. Nor do I envy him his royal possessions. But, as I say, old George of England will need spies, too. Could you name any one *with experience*, to enlist in his services, think you?"

She talked rapidly and recklessly. Mary's shocked face amused her, annoyed her, baffled her. "There! Now having swallowed me in the dose of a non-saccharine pellet, tell me what you think of me. Don't be over-nice, for your face would betray you." She could not brook Mary's regard.

Result of the Great Meeting. 37

“I think,” began the latter, and then she paused. Her courtesy forbade the truth, her disposition forbade a lie.

“Thanking you for your unspoken criticism,” and she bowed right regally. “Now let *me* tell *you*. But, first, I must introduce myself. I am——”

“I beg your pardon, it isn’t necessary, and I’m in a hurry home.”

“So?” questioned the rebel. “But I insist. Were I a man I must needs submit gracefully and curse disgracefully. But I’m not. It’s the only time in my life I’ve ever been benefited by you, old petticoats,” and she gave her skirts a vigorous shake. “Well, Miss Norris, I am Helene de Varnée Rockwood, a descendant of kings and queens of France. I trust, Mistress Norris, you appreciate the honor I do you, even though it be against your will,”—she swept another courtesy.

“So much so,” and Mary’s voice sounded a note of warning, “that I must again beg to leave you. And before I go, you must know that I am not Miss Norris, but Mary Clarkson, a poor relative of a——”

“Good Tory,” interrupted Helene. “Pray do not let me detain you, Mistress Clarkson;” saying so she placed herself deliberately in the pathway. “But, nevertheless, I’d like to say three words for

you to dream on to-night. You think I am wicked, but I'm not ; you think I'm a traitor, I'm not that either. I'm a loyal patriot, prouder of that than of any knightly lineage. I don't know you yet, but I know your cousin, a big, good hearted country lad, with a great many things yet to learn ; and I have a great deal of respect for your guardian, a fine old Tory. Do you know, I like his face so much," and Helene was actually upon the point of growing confidential, when she suddenly recollected herself and stopped. "Good-bye," she said abruptly.

"Good-bye," said Mary.

"Thanks. It's so nice to part friends." Mary smiled grimly.

"Well, good-bye, then ! I'll come to see you some time, and coax for a cup of tea. Dear me ! How I love it, and I haven't tasted a drop since they diluted it with salt water. Tell me, where is Ceylon bred ? If you know the place, I'll transform myself into a—oh—cat and come around some stormy night to lap it up. No, some balmy night," corrected she, "for I'll need some of the Milky Way to trim my tea with. As for sugar, well, I'll save some of the lumps you've given me to-day." Mary smiled in spite of herself.

"Very well, when I see the Milky Way and a black cat at the same time," she began.

Result of the Great Meeting. 39

“Why a black cat?”

“They contain witches, do they not?”

“Yes, and my complexion even as a tabby couldn’t be white, I suppose. But I want three gray hairs for whiskers—’twill be a novel sensation, indeed. Now, frankly, would you rather give it tea—or poison, Miss Clarkson?”

“Oh, I’m not always cruel.”

“There! That was the first real smile you’ve smiled. And upon poor me! *Je suis heureuse, mademoiselle.* Give my love to Mr. Norris, Sr., and—good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” and Miss Clarkson’s farewell was a trifle less sedate this time.

“And you won’t hurt me if I meow some bright starry night under your latticed bower.”

“I don’t think I could hurt you,” and Mary’s better nature asserted itself.

“That’s the way with every one,” complained Helene, “nobody *can* hurt me, everybody *does*. Now, for the tenth and last time, good-bye! We’ll meet again!” Mary looked back a number of times, but no human creature was in sight. One was not far away, however, hidden behind a clump of trees.

“So she has taken his fancy. Poor John!” Evidently Miss Clarkson was neither consoled nor flattered by the thought. “Such a restless, pro-

voking sprite! Her pretty eyes might attract for the moment—but has she the heart or brains to hold? All men must be amused, I suppose,” she thought, bitterly. Lives there any normal women who some time in her life has not said the same?

As for the restless sprite, she wandered slowly and quietly out on two feet. “Now I know the family,” she mused. “Quite a pleasant greeting! How mad she was! I wonder if she loves the lad. She’s very beautiful—almost too perfect—but human enough, for all that. How she hated me at first! With all her meekness she’s no mild Amelia. I wonder John doesn’t love her. But what if he does?” This gave her food for reflection. But, contrary to the hackneyed masculine rumor anent feminine tongues, neither of the girls mentioned a word about their strange meeting in the woods.

Meanwhile, John was steadily working on the farm; but his father well knew why he practiced daily with his fowling-piece. He knew, also, that his son was one of the leaders of the minutemen and that he was in constant communication with the sympathizers who haunted Fraunces’ Tavern and the Cradle of Liberty. He did not see, however, the copies of “Common Sense,” a pamphlet published by the Philadelphia Congress, which John took good care to conceal lest they might

Result of the Great Meeting. 41

be destroyed. Wretched anxiety and nerveless waiting had tended to make the household far from happy. John was irritable, reserved, depressed.

"You look dissipated, sirrah," exclaimed his father, one day at the table. "You remain out too late at night."

John quietly pushed aside the cup of tea, which was invariably served to him and which he never drank.

"Everything will be dissipated soon, father," he retorted, rising—"lands and money and freedom."

"That's because the colonies are overrun by a parcel of hot-headed fools like you," cried Norris, Sr. "But, harkee, boy, the lands and money are mine and are not to be disposed of to a pack of low-bred mongrels."

"Exactly," said John, savagely, as he took his hat. "We are low-bred mongrels, perhaps, for some of us are bred by our fathers, and the good in us, such as it is, comes from our sainted mothers. The money and the lands are yours—cling to them, if you can. But the freedom is mine, mine, sir, and no power under heaven, neither you nor King George, can take that from me."

"How dare you, you d—— upstart?" screamed the older man, as he sprang from his chair and

raised his arm, trembling with passion. "Unsay that, or I'll strike you."

"No, you won't," cried Mary, quite beside herself. "Father!" she called in a tone full of warning and reproach. But he turned on her.

"Hush, you—woman. I half believe you're one of those cursed rioters, too. Will you take that back? Will you, I say?" No reply. The ashy cheeks of the old man flushed, for Norris was nigh on to his threescore and ten. His black eyes flashed. His temper, always peppery, was now uncontrollable.

"Then take that!" and he planted a blow full in his son's face. John's stalwart frame tottered and he put his handkerchief to his nose.

"Oh! John, dear John, are you hurt?" cried Mary. Then, with scintillating eyes, she faced the offender.

"How could you, sir? How *dared* you? And I here to see. I'll never forgive you as long as I live."

"Leave this room," yelled the old man. Mary ignored him.

"John, tell me, are you hurt much?" and she put a tearful face close to his. He stooped and kissed her.

"Good-bye, Mary, I'm all right. Don't worry, my dear."

Result of the Great Meeting. 43

"Not 'good-bye,' John? Oh, my God, not that, not that! You won't go! He didn't mean it!"

"I can't come back, Mary. Not here," and he laid his large hand tenderly on her hair. "Don't fret about me, my girl." He walked to the gate. There he turned for a last look. Mary, with face as white as her newly ironed frock, was leaning heavily against the wall. His father, motionless and stony as a block of granite, stood in the background; tall, dignified, implacable. Curiously enough John had never before admired his father as much as at that moment. Then a great wave of indignation and injustice swept over him. Just at this juncture a succession of shouts was heard. A crowd of boys and men came running up, breathless.

"War! War!" they cried. "Blood has been shed!" Nobody noticed John's red handkerchief. At a less momentous time, the humor might have been apparent. But long afterward Mary remembered hearing as in a dream John's voice asking:

"What's the news?" Then a chorus of replies.

"They fired on our men at Lexington five days ago!"

"And we fired back!"

"Now it's war!"

"War! War!"

"We need you, John. Say good-bye to your old Tory father."

"You hypocrite! Why don't you put on a red coat?"

"You're an old fish. Why not turn lobster?" After this volley John turned for the last time.

"Then it's war, at last!" and his voice to the poor girl carried an exultant ring. "I'm off, little woman. Good-bye." And he was gone and the sun went down behind a cloud.

Weary mon^{ths} dragged themselves away. Every morning when the sun rose Mary wondered if any news of John would come before the western horizon would be lighted by its flames. Mr. Norris was taciturn and morose, but he was growing old rapidly. The house of late years had not been an abode of peace, but John had been there. Now its lonely quietude was like the awful waste after the tempest. Mary wondered vaguely if the old man relented at all, but his bitter denunciations of the patriots whenever a loyalist friend dropped in, caused her to believe to the contrary.

One morning a bulky letter, addressed to her, was brought by a messenger to the house. Mr. Norris took it, looked at the superscription, while Mary turned scarlet and pale by turns, and then deliberately threw it into the fire.

"No letter bearing that handwriting is opened

Result of the Great Meeting. 45

in this house," he said, brutally; then, turning abruptly, he left the room.

The girl sat as one stunned. Then she ran to the grate quickly, and drew out the charred paper. She caught sight of the words, "Ticonderoga," "Nathan Hale, poor fellow," and "We are going to Canada," and, a little further down, "Marinus Willett, my captain," and that was all. She clenched her hands in despair. The sharp nails cut into the quick.

"Oh, my Savior! Be he right or wrong, shield him from danger." This is the agonized cry of loving womankind in all climes and in all times.

When John left his father's home he speedily joined the other Sons of Liberty and assisted them in the task of distributing arms to the people. As the mayor was a sympathizer with the kingly cause, he was courteously but firmly requested to be relieved of the reins of the government. The Custom House was closed and the Embargo Act passed. A committee of one hundred prominent citizens, of whom Isaac Low was chairman, were invested with the city affairs. On this committee served Scott, Jay, McDougall, Lamb and the elder De Lancey—all well known to John. Besides these such names as Roosevelt, Goelet, Broome, Platt, Livingston and Desbrosses were then household words. John was active now and singularly

happy. He helped to provide weapons; assisted in the disbursement of the cannon not belonging to the province; and, at his suggestion, arms were refused sale to the loyalist sympathizers. With some others he was sent to Governor Colden to tell him that order should be preserved in New York. Wisely the committee decided not to be aggressors. The British regiments soon after landed and were courteously treated, much to John's chagrin.

"We are acting like cowards," he said to Willett, for whom he had conceived a profound admiration. "Even Edmund Burke says he is astonished at our allowing the forces of the king to enter New York port."

"Don't be rash, boy," answered the other. "True courtesy never yet lost a man."

"It isn't courtesy," answered John, hotly. "It's the Tory element at work. They find fault with our organization."

"Do not expect to have all your acts favored, Norris. Dissension is ever rife in a multitude. The price we pay for public office is criticism, often harsh and unjust. We must suffer ourselves to get used to these things. Even at college I remember one of the boys was jealous of me, with little enough reason, I vow, so he circulated all kinds of rumors about me. They were absolutely without foundation."

Result of the Great Meeting. 47

"Did you settle him?" queried John.

"Yes, with my fists. I was ashamed of it afterward, and have never resorted to that mode of satisfaction since. I call it cowardly."

"I don't," said John. "The coward in that case was the liar who spread these stories."

"By the way, Norris, I notice that young De Lancey and you have some sort of child's quarrel." John flushed with shame at the other's expression.

"Don't keep it up, my boy. It doesn't pay. I have my eye on you both and want you if I get my commission. Would you like to obey my orders?"

John flushed again, this time with pleasure.

"Will you have a regiment?" he asked.

"I'll be likely to get a captaincy in McDougall's. I'd like you, John, for your recklessness and bravery and De Lancey for his coolness and insight. It's well to have some trusted ally, John. I may put your two feet into the fire. We'll need superhuman energy and patience for, by the Lord of Hosts, 'tis a tremendous task that lies before us."

"I hope," said the younger man, "that the honor you confer upon me will not be misplaced."

"I feel certain it will not," and Willett's hand rested on the brawny young shoulder, "but, tut, lad, we're not on the road yet. Why, here's Rock-

wood's lass, as brave and pretty a bit of sweet maidenhood as ever trod the green earth. What would you, Mistress Helene?"

Her cheeks grew crimson under John's gaze as she replied, "As I was in Fraunces' Tavern, just now, with daddy, we watched the soldiers leaving for Boston, and they have several wagons loaded with ammunition. My father said 'twas contrary to the orders of the committee, and bade me warn the——"

But Willett waited no longer.

"Here, John, you may begin to obey now."

And away they went to be joined by some others whom Helene had met and warned. She followed the men for a short distance, but when John had reached Broad Street, he turned to see her, but was disappointed. Who shall say? Perhaps, womanlike, she had expected him to turn sooner.

Here he seized the horses' heads, thus stopping the whole procession. Willett had entered into an argument with the drivers, when the mayor came up.

"You are endangering the public peace, sir," he announced authoritatively.

"Here comes Scott!" cried John.

"Here, Scott, as you're one of the committee, am I right or wrong?" asked Willett.

Result of the Great Meeting. 49

"Right, of course," he answered, not without anger. "The troops are violating orders. The arms cannot go to Boston."

Thus, with impedimenta considerably lessened, the soldiers were permitted to embark. This was but the beginning of the end.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE MEN AND A GIRL.

WHILE early battles were being fought in the vicinity of Boston and Northern New York, Willett, under McDougall, invaded Canada. John did not go with them, as he had been detailed on special business. After their return, he again joined his own regiment.

Young De Lancey one morning sauntered up to John and remarked casually:

"I saw old Mr. Rockwood to-day. He's getting pretty feeble."

John looked at him in astonishment. His slight, aristocratic figure was drawn to its full height, which lacked but an inch of John's own. His thin lips were curled a little to one side, a favorite trick of his that Norris hated. Unlike most of the troops, his clothes were made of fine material, and fitted his lithe body like the skin of some animal. Blue were his eyes, clear and cold, but the pupils had a habit of dilating when he became excited. At such times they appeared

almost black. This was the only way John ever had of knowing he was angry; and he had come to look for and court this danger signal. The nonchalant insolence of the fellow always annoyed John beyond endurance. They never held two moments' conversation unless it were absolutely unavoidable. So what could be the hidden meaning of this pretense of amicability? Norris was not to be hoodwinked.

"I am very sorry," he said, then turned on his heel.

"So am I, since you don't care to receive his message," and De Lancey started off in an opposite direction.

"You did not say that he sent any message for me," said John, returning. "Since when does Mr. Rockwood choose you to act as messenger to me? The poor old man is losing his senses."

"So many kind friends aver. But younger men have done so before his day—presupposing, of course, they have any to lose."

He always spoke slowly, as if weighing his words, and their consequences; an example John might well have followed with profit.

"I did not give you the message, for you did not give me the necessary time. You were in such furious haste to bid me a 'fond and affectionate' farewell. What a consistent gentleman you are!"

John vouchsafed no reply. De Lancey glanced at him from under his lashes.

"Why are we not friends?" he asked.

For an instant John was speechless. If a cannon ball had fallen at his feet, he would have been less astonished. Then he found his tongue and temper.

"Why?" he ejaculated. "Why? Because, James De Lancey, you are an aristocrat and have never attempted to conceal the fact, within my hearing, at least. Why? Because your lack of brains is amply balanced by your superabundance of conceit. Why? Because you tried your level best to bring trouble in our household by circulating stories, partly true and partly false, about my connection with the army, of which you yourself and all your family were zealous members. Why? Simply because we are natural enemies, I suppose, though working for a common cause; and let me tell you, Mr. De Lancey, with all your arrogance and insolence, that I, John Norris, a plain country farmer, consider myself and all my kith and kin too good to hold ten minutes' unnecessary talk with you. That's my message to you. Now, what's your message to me?"

De Lancey's nostrils quivered and angry lights played under his lashes. But he moved not a step nearer. His lips curled a little more cynically

and he smiled with a degree of malice as he answered, neither louder nor quicker than was his custom.

“ ‘Tis well to know one’s candid opinion, Friend John. If you make as good a lover as you do a hater, I’d better have a fear methinks, lest I lose favor in the sight of a pair of bewitching brown eyes. What would you say now, were I to so far forget my dignity as to reply to your thrusts? For thrusts they were, John, sharper than your poor sword can give. You keep your gentler stabs for the *enemy*. Suppose I were to state in a perfectly calm and logical manner that I never intentionally vaunted my aristocratic lineage in your august presence; that, contrariwise, I have ever admired your pluck, grit and—need I add?—unfailing politeness. That, being blessed with a fairly good drilling in the rudiments of the languages, I never was at such a loss for a general topic of conversation that I was obliged to introduce the individual ‘You,’ as such. What would you say to such, Friend John?”

“I’d say you were a liar!” was the instantaneous reply. “I hate your chatter. Why don’t you speak out like a man, tell the truth, and cast off, for once and for all, this ludicrous mantle of hypocrisy? At least I’d respect you then.”

“There are other ways of winning men’s re-

spect than by acting like a boor," replied De Lancey, unperturbed. "I'd never slash a man to gain his good opinion, and—who knows?—perhaps I do not covet it. I'm not of a religious frame of mind, but, John," and his eyes rested full on those of the other, "instead of knocking you down—and I don't know why I don't—I'll tell you Mr. Rockwood is dying and he wants to see you. Helene is with him, of course. She did not second the invitation, but a wish of this sort is generally respected. He's at Dover's Camp," and without another word, he mounted his horse and was off, making music suited to Norris' mood.

"Oh, I've behaved like an ass," muttered he, aloud.

"Aye, right you are," sounded a voice, the clarion tones of which he knew well.

"Where the deuce are you hiding?" he asked, vexed and mortified.

Helene, in gay mood, emerged from a clump of trees near by. Her short skirt was red, and so was her tasseled cap, but her cheeks shamed them both. A pretty picture, indeed, with its dark background and sapphire canopy. At least, so John's untutored eyes expressed. It is safe to say she read his glance aright.

"That's the first true word you've spoken in an hour. So you have the grace to be crestfallen

and ashamed! Well may you be! I heard voices some time since, and, looking, thought I had discovered two gentlemen. It seems I had made a mistake. There was only one. He is not here now," and her tones were plaintive.

"If you came to see him, Helene, there he goes yonder," and he pointed angrily to De Lancey's retreating figure. "Make haste, and you'll catch him."

John reasoned shrewdly that since De Lancey had so lately seen her, she could not have ridden this far for that purpose.

She threw him a glance that must surely have annihilated him had he been made of daintier fibre. Then she looked after De Lancey.

"'Tis a fine form, truly," quoth she. "Not too broad shouldered," with a grimace at John. "A horse rather than an ox. He's as supple as a bough in a vernal breeze."

"And about as budding," broke in John. "See here, Helene, did you come here to admire my enemy?"

"If you mean Mr. De Lancey, no, I did not. What if I had said, 'yes'?" saucily.

"Then I should have——"

"Bid me go sans ceremony. I'll proceed to do it," and she made a movement, but he intercepted her.

"You little fox! You well know I wouldn't send you away. I may be a 'boor,' as your friend says, but I simply couldn't do that."

She smiled coquettishly.

"Then it's pure politeness that deters you. Oh! Master John, even for that am I grateful, since it keeps me nearer thee."

The temptation at this point was too strong. John was but a country fellow, so he rashly followed the dictates of his heart. Had he been older and wiser—but, Older and Wiser Man, shall you attempt to excuse him by wilful perjury?

Helene felt his arm about her waist and a quick, throbbing kiss impressed on her cheek, now rosier than ever, ere she had time to realize what had occurred.

The next instant she was free. She faced John with a look in her eyes that he had never before seen there. Then she held out a trembling little hand, and her look was almost pathetic as she asked in tones quivering with suppressed excitement:

"Where's my fee, Mr. Norris?"

John's mind was not subtile enough to grasp the situation. He looked at her blankly. She stamped her foot.

"My fee, sir," she repeated. "You said you would give £5 for a kiss. Now my part of the bargain is fulfilled—what about yours?"

Three Men and a Girl. 57

John felt there was something wrong here, but not knowing what else to do he fumbled with his hands in his pockets. She misunderstood the movement.

“Would you actually dare offer me anything? Oh! I could kill you where you stand. After what you have done, I suppose you’d dare do anything. And I thought you were so different—and believed me to be”—she was becoming incoherent now and tears struggled for mastery. In a violent effort to suppress them she threw herself on the bank.

“Oh, I wish I were dead,” she cried.

Poor John! His position now was pitiable. He stood with clenched fists afraid to come nearer her. It was safe to say, had any one else been the culprit, he would have sent him rods away without asking a question.

Suddenly Helene sat up.

“John Norris, do you know that even James De Lancey never did that,” she more demanded than questioned.

“I am very glad to hear it,” John replied, before he had fathomed his own thought. She frowned.

“Would you take such a liberty with Mary Clarkson?”

He was a little surprised at the query, but did

not stop to consider its relevancy. He did not know that the girls had ever met, but of his cousin he had often spoken. He answered promptly:

“I have kissed Mary, yes, many times.”

“Then not in this way.” Here she showed her worldly wisdom. “If you had you would not answer ‘yes’ so glibly. Now, go home, and tell her that you kissed me,” she panted.

“Helene!” he warned. “You know I—no, I’ll not answer that—it’s beneath either you to suggest or me to reply to.”

“Then why did you do it?”

Her demand was half a challenge now.

“Why? Oh, Lord, I don’t know! It’s your fault as much as mine. If you sit that way and look up at me as you’re doing now, I might do the blamed thing again.”

Like an earthquake’s eruption she shot up, and to John’s relief laughed.

“The blamed thing again,” she echoed. “Oh, of all insulting geniuses, commend me to John Norris, Jr., of Paulus Hook.”

“Helene, you know I didn’t mean it.”

“Didn’t mean what?” she questioned, in her old-time mockery. “The—the—process or the argument?”

“You’d better stay out of range, you little tease.

And then ask me why I did it! Helene de Varnee Rockwood, you're a monstrous hoax."

"Well, in this case I'm not," and her seriousness was genuine. "I shall not tell you my errand unless you promise never, under any circumstances, to repeat this morning's work. I suppose you'd call it work. All disagreeable things are work, aren't they? At any rate, John Norris, work or play, it shall be no more—understand that. Do you promise?"

"I do," answered the young fellow, solemnly.

"Then I'll tell you my news: What Mr. De Lancey has told you, is, alas! almost true. My father is very ill, and he has asked for you. I don't know whether he has anything important to say or not. He has always liked you, strange to say—my father's tastes and mine are very dissimilar—and it may simply be a fancy of his. I don't think he'll die, do you? What shall I do if he does? He is all I have, absolutely my all. Tell me he will not die!" she pleaded. "And you'll come. I knew you would. He's old, of course, but he may live for years yet. I cannot give him up—and I *won't*."

The hot tears sprang to her eyes, but she drew her hand angrily across her face.

"Can you come now?"

"I must ask Captain Willett first. But you

know I'll come just as soon as possible. I have two reasons for doing so; he asked me, and you have. I'm afraid I'll do little good. But he may rally and fight on until the end. Don't worry, Helene."

"Mr. De Lancey says you may have his horse," suggested she, timidly.

"I'd walk all the way sooner than take him."

"John, it was kindly meant. You do the dear fellow a great injustice."

His answer was a grunt.

"Yes, he'd like me to be under obligation to him, the—the hypocrite."

"Now, you shan't!" cried she. "You wrong him, I'm sure. I like him very much."

"Oh, you do, do you? Well, he's a lucky fellow—a confoundedly lucky fellow. Why do some get all and some nothing?"

"Perhaps you come in for a share, too. One should not be selfish in the distribution of her affection."

"Do I then, after all, get a little? That's kind. But, Helene, I can't share anything with James De Lancey."

"You don't know what you're relinquishing, Mr. Norris."

"So you decide in his favor. I might have known. He has everything I haven't."

"You great goose!" laughed the girl. "You make me smile, though Heaven knows—what's that?" she broke off abruptly.

"Hark! 'Tis the red-coats coming! Hide! There under the trees! Be quick! Take your gun! Lie flat! Don't fire unless you have to, and don't budge an inch," and her whispered commands showed the genius of good generalship.

Just at that moment a troop of horsemen came into view. Seeing her seated on the grass the leader drew rein.

"Here, my fine girl," and she rose awkwardly and curtsied. "I see fresh horse-hoofs on the road. Hast seen cavalrymen go by?"

"I saw one some time ago, so please your majesty," and she curtsied again.

John raised himself to see as well as hear.

"I'm not the king, my good maiden," and John chuckled silently to see the look of astonishment on her face.

"The little minx!" thought he. "I wonder if she'll get herself into a scrape," and his fingers tightened over his musket.

"I did not think, sir. You look so fine and brave, sir. All you men do."

The officer smiled.

"My pretty girl, you flatter us. We do make a trifle better showing, I avow, than those rebels

in plough-shoes. Was this cavalryman one of us?"

"I don't think so, your honor," with still another curtsey. "He was dressed in homespun and looked like a tramp."

John gave a smile of satisfaction at this description of the ever-elegant De Lancey.

"Was that long ago?" asked the officer.

"Some time," she began. "You couldn't get him now. Besides, I'm not certain which road he took," all of which was true.

"You couldn't lie, I suppose?" and he eyed her a trifle suspiciously.

"Oh! yes, I could, sir. Just try me."

"You young witch!" he exclaimed, laughing. "One could forgive you many lies for the sake of your '*beaux yeux*.' I don't suppose you understand what that means."

"No, sir," was her obedient reply, ably proving, by the contrary, the truth of her last statement.

Then, "Are you a Frenchman, sir? I love Frenchmen," clapping her little brown hands, ecstatically.

"No, I'm only a British officer," he answered modestly, with swelling breast. "But I'm Frenchman enough to give a *louis d'or* for a kiss. Come, now, is it a bargain?"

John, at the risk of being taken, could not resist the temptation of peeping. Helene was coqueting finely, her face smiles and dimples. John clenched his teeth and wondered if this were the little siren who had shown such temper a moment since.

“I’m only an American girl, sir,” she was saying, “but I have no kisses to give, so please your honor.”

“The devil! Perhaps I’ve some to take. I’ve half a mind to try. You’re a provoking spirit.”

“Have a care, sir,” she threatened. “With the seal of a kiss goes often the seal of everlasting scorn.”

John winced and debated within himself if that shaft were intended to find two marks. “And, honored sir,” she concluded, “keep your whole mind intact. One never knows what may come to tax its powers, in these days of peril. As for spirits, they’re all provoking. ’Tis best for folks not to indulge in them.”

“See here, who taught you to make witticisms, young lady?”

She felt that she had overstepped the boundary line of sweet simplicity. But she could not resist the answer, “Perhaps the gentleman you called on a moment since.”

He laughed.

"Where do you live? It seems to me so fair a face and so clever a head should grace some better land than this."

"What if I should say there is no better, sir? I live, oh, the greensward is my carpet, and the blue sky my canopy."

"Very pretty, indeed, but not very safe for maidens, I should say. Do you think if I should come this way again, since you're such a child of nature, that if I searched that clump of trees yonder," pointing his finger at John who trembled even at that distance, "that I might succeed in finding your hiding place?"

"That clump is too small for safe concealment, I fear," she replied, coolly. "When I have occasion to hide, sir, 'twill be under better shelter and you'll be as likely to find me in a tree as under it."

"I don't doubt that in the least. Well, my little damsel, we must be off." Then with a meaning glance, "We pass this way to-morrow."

"At what time, sir?"

"Afternoon," lowering his voice. "I should like to see you again. Will you grant my desire?"

"Unless my household duties interfere. Perhaps my husband——"

Three Men and a Girl. 65

"You merciless flirt! What an arrant teller of yarns you are! Remember, to-morrow?"

"Shall you be going the same way?"

"Yes," and John heard the hoofs growing fainter.

He stood up, but Helene motioned him to remain. After a few moments, up she scampered.

"Now, my poor fellow, your great limbs are all cramped."

"You're a dear," said he. "I wish you'd let me pay you——"

"In your own coin, oh, no, kind sir," she laughed. "No more of that!"

"That officer was right, though, you are a merciless flirt."

"Every man says that to every woman. You err if you consider it a compliment."

"So he's coming this way to-morrow. Don't forget to tell Captain Willett. It may change his plans. Wonder if I can meet him and learn anything. I'll try. It's worth it. Now, sir, why that cloud flitting hither and thither across your classic countenance? I am playing the spy, 'tis true. Some one must, even though it be not over-nice. I would rather be General Washington, *'cela va sans dire.'*"

"The fate of spies is death," observed he. "I

66 His Rebel Sweetheart.

should not want anything to happen to you, Helene, for you know I——”

“Yes, you’re a good fellow, John, I thank you with all my heart. I must go back to father now. You’ll come soon. I can’t bear to leave any of his wishes unfulfilled, now,” and the piteous tones awakened all the sympathy in the young man’s tender nature.

“You poor little girl!” he murmured, softly, and for a second his big hand gently caressed her curls. “May God keep you, Helene, and make your father well for your sweet sake.”

He attempted to help her, but before he could do so, she had sprung into the saddle and was out of sight.

CHAPTER V.

AN ENGLISH OFFICER AND A HALF-WITTED SOLDIER.

WHEN John saw Mr. Rockwood, he thought, indeed, that the old man's hours on earth were few. Helene was hovering about her father in anxious solicitude. When Norris saw her smile of welcome he felt amply recompensed for the fatigue of the journey. After a short business talk Helene's father sent her to prepare some gruel. She glanced at him in quick surprise and then gave John a keen flash of intelligence. He could not understand as well as she how flimsy was the pretext to be rid of her presence, for to Mr. Rockwood the sight of all food had, of late, grown distasteful. It had only been by dint of alternate threats and coaxing that his daughter had been enabled to induce him to eat at all.

"John," said he, as soon as Helene had left the room, "De Lancey was here to-day."

He turned on his rude couch to get a better view of John's face. The latter began to feel a little uncomfortable.

68 His Rebel Sweetheart.

“I saw him,” said John, after a brief silence.

“There is no love in your heart for him, that I understand,” explained the sick man. Then he added, after a pause:

“Can you imagine why he came?”

John shook his head.

“He wanted Helene——”

Faintly and slowly the few words came, making them the more impressive. The invalid half rose, and John knew that two eyes much like Helene’s, were trying to fathom the effect produced by this statement. He moved uneasily. For a moment the stillness was profound. It was broken by John’s question:

“What answer did you make to him?”

“I gave him my permission and my blessing.”

John rose and went to the window to escape further scrutiny. Below Helene could be seen walking restlessly to and fro. Evidently, the gruel was prepared.

“I trust you may never regret either,” John forced himself to say.

“James De Lancey is a good young man. He has known us for a long time. I know none better who is a suitor for my daughter’s hand.”

Something in the tone made John keep his face well hidden. Why should he reveal aught impulsively to another, that sound judgment and

good sense had told him to conceal from himself?

“Your daughter need have no lack of suitors, and she is very young. In common justice no one should force a marriage, least of all a parent.”

In spite of himself, John’s voice was growing excited.

“I shall not force it, my boy. This is the one thing I wished to see you about. If I die my one regret shall be to leave Helene. Will you see that she goes to her aunt? Nothing shall be done against her will. I have always indulged her, perhaps too much. And yet few girls are better, in spite of my laxity in discipline. I have ever loved the lassie. She is her mother’s image, except her eyes. Her mother’s eyes were gray—the most beautiful I ever saw.”

“They could scarce be more beautiful than Helene’s,” thought John. “After all, I’m glad hers are not gray.”

The sick man continued: “My will is regularly made. My property goes to her, of course, and what money I possess. Somehow, my lad, I say this to you rather than to De Lancey, for I feel that you, being more disinterested than he, will manage affairs to please me.”

Was there the shadow of an interrogation underlying part of that statement?

"And then, too, I think she would obey you sooner, though why I don't know. Perhaps she can wheedle James too much. She is not ignorant of her power over him. May I leave her to your care, John? I would trust you to fulfill any promise."

"I shall do what I can, my level best," was the reply. Then more impulsively, "There is nothing I would not do to shield her from harm."

"I believe that—indeed, I know it," exclaimed Rockwood.

"I do not like De Lancey, but if she loves him, why, neither my interference nor yours would count for aught."

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," the old man sighed. "I am weary. Call Helene."

The next morning Helene's father had rallied after his sinking attack and seemed quite like himself again. This served to make Helene's mood one of unusual gaiety, as she remembered her English officer and galloped forth to meet him humming as she went:

*"Let Crecy, Poitiers, and let Agincourt show,
How our ancestors acted some ages ago,
While Minden's red field, and Quebec shall proclaim
That their sons are unchanged in nature or name."*

The weather was cold and the girl drew her woolen muffler well around her as she waited near the trysting-place.

She dismounted and ran about, partly from a desire to keep warm and partly from pure exuberant spirits. Snatches of verses De Lancey had taught her rose to her lips, but as she heard the clatter of hoofs she began:

*"When Jove resolved to send a curse,
Not plague, not famine, but much worse,
And all the woes of life rehearse,
He cursed us with a Congress."*

The troops drew nearer. She heard them halt, and concluded that they were listening, so she sang away with gay recklessness,

*"Clinton, Burgoyne and gallant Howe,
Will soon reward our conduct true,
And to each traitor give his due,
Perdition waits the Congress."*

Still they did not appear.

"Do they think I'm going to amuse them with such lies in rhyme any longer?" she demanded to her horse fiercely. Then she saw the gleam of their jackets.

"Once more," she whispered, and her voice rang out,

*"Huzza! Huzza! We thrice huzza!
Return peace, harmony and law.
Restore such times as once we saw,
And bid farewell to Congress."*

She had not been so much astonished as she had pretended when male voices by the score joined in the refrain. She only smiled and waved her kerchief. A clapping of hands ensued.

"I'm glad to see—or hear—that you're a little loyalist," said the officer of yesterday.

Helene curtsied and made a grimace to Mother Earth. Then she smiled up at him.

"It's beastly cold to-day. Your November air chills one to the marrow. Is that your animal? It looks like a spirited creature. Couldn't you ride our way a little?"

"Used to ordering one about, evidently," was Helene's mental comment, as she acquiesced readily. The men fell back, so she and the officer rode along undisturbed.

"Are you Colonel Cranmer?" she finally asked.

"Yes, how did you know?"

"Oh, intuitively. I'm the seventh daughter of the seventh daughter. My grandmother was a witch and my mother was a——"

"Lady," interrupted the colonel. "And you are a witch lady, in consequence. I owe you an apology for mistaking you yesterday. I might have known you were no ordinary country maid, despite your 'Worshipful Majesty' and the rest."

Helene felt the ice giving away a little.

"Did you find the man you were searching for yesterday?" she asked.

"What do you think?" he questioned, by way of reply. "Can't you read the past? Or does your clairvoyancy extend only to the future?"

"I know what happened," she ventured, at a guess. "You didn't find the man, but you came upon the tracks of many men. They were stationed near here. Are you going to capture them?"

"We are going to try. We must be modest, my little lady—these lads in homespun are no fools. By St. George! Here comes one now, all alone. Looks like a messenger."

Sure enough, there was a single rider advancing.

"I wish I could save him," was her first thought, but her heart sank when she recognized the form. It was that of John Norris. Quick as thought Cranmer's last words acted as a spur.

"They're not all fools, but this one is," she cried. "Poor John! He's half-witted. Thinks

he's a great soldier. Carries a gun and plays Yankee."

"Halt!"

It was the colonel's voice interrupting her.

"John!" she called frantically, "I know how foolish you are, but you needn't stand there gaping like a booby. Where are those posies I told you to gather? Forgotten, I'll warrant, you half-witted fellow! Oh, I've no patience with you!"

The last sentence was a relief to her. John was a great lover of flowers, and she discovered some leaves sticking out of his pocket, hence her question.

"Will the big clown ever fall in with my scheme?" she wondered, with palpitating breast.

Truth to tell, John was so nonplussed for the nonce, coming into contact with a whole cavalry troop of English, with Helene at the head, that for the moment he did look stupid enough. Saying nothing he quietly drew a few belated blossoms from his pocket and gave them to her, saluting Colonel Cranmer as he did so.

"Are you a soldier?" demanded the officer. "I see you carry a gun."

"Yes, sir," and John raised his head proudly, but he caught Helene's look, black with anger and contempt, and lowered his lids quickly. Then

he thought of her, "We know how foolish you are." That, then, was his cue. So he added:

"I think I am, sir. I carry a musket anyway. That's all any of you soldiers do."

Colonel Cranmer laughed. So did she. Hers was one of relief.

"John," she said, "these men are soldiers, but they do more than carry firearms. They fight."

"They've been fighting us for years with stamps and tea. 'Tis poor ammunition," quoth the fool.

"What is your gun loaded with, my man?" asked the officer, evidently amused.

"Bullets from King George's statue."

Cranmer frowned.

"That is still poorer ammunition, methinks." John hung his head in a silly manner, looking like a big schoolboy who had just received a reprimand. Then he added:

"'Tis poor indeed. 'Twill not even pierce the thin skin of a red-coat."

This time Helene knew he had aimed above the mark. Cranmer became vexed.

"He is so clever a fool I think we need him in camp," he said.

"For shame, Colonel Cranmer, he means no offense. 'Twere small indeed, for one occupying aught but a petty office to concern himself with a poor simpleton such as our John. Why, he gath-

ers our eggs and 'shoos' the chickens. I'd miss John dreadfully. You'll not take him?"

"Lucky fellow!" quoth the colonel. "I would I were half-fitted, too, if it would gain me favor in the very charming depths of your lambent eyes."

"You have gained my favor, Colonel Cranmer, if that is what you mean," she said, innocently, laying her hand for an instant on his sleeve. "But so great a man as your honor can need a lady's favor but little."

The colonel gave her a look, fraught with intelligence, as he muttered, half to himself:

"I wonder if the fellow should be searched. The rebels might transform him into a messenger."

"A messenger of the gods, truly!" she laughed. "A second Mercury! Do, by all means. You'll find a couple of bird's nests, maybe an egg or two, some herbs, warranted to cure all ills, and perchance, the speediest route to Ponce de Leon's fountain."

The last was a thrust, for Colonel Cranmer was no longer a young man. It told.

"You may go," he said, and John saluted awkwardly.

Helene uttered a sigh of satisfaction, but the officer said:

"Take his gun. It may do harm in the hands of a fellow like him."

"I guess I could get it," said Helene. "He won't give it up to you. It's his sole companion. John!" she called, sharply.

He turned, now some little distance away.

"Give up your gun!" and then in a whisper, "we go on eight miles. Tell Willett."

Then she cantered back.

"He didn't even want to give it to me," she cried, "but I have it. Now, salute! Present arms! Fall in! Left!—Right!" She laughed. So did the troops.

"I hardly blame him for giving it up. I think half of my men would lay down arms if you asked them to." She turned, on the impulse.

"Halt!" she commanded. Whether from habit or from the belief that the colonel was humoring his fair companion, they instantly obeyed. Both the leaders laughed merrily.

"That settles the argument," quoth he. "I'll change 'half my men' to the whole army. I suppose your lovers are dying daily."

"Nay, sir, indeed. Our men are slow in love, but quick in war."

"Whom do you mean by 'our men'?"

"The country lads in these parts, both loyalist and rebel; it applies to all. The only men that

make love to us are the British soldiers. One generally likes them, too," she added naively.

Her look plainly indicated that she found one of that type now.

So they chattered nothings all the way to camp. Helene's spirits rose. She had conceived a genuine liking for her companion.

"Poor fellow!" she thought, "it's too bad, but war is war. I hope they'll catch them to-night. No, thank you, Colonel Cranmer," she said aloud, in answer to his invitation to dismount, "my father waits for me to sup with him."

"Where do you live?"

"Oh, not so far away," she laughed. "You will see me again. Don't forget me," and she was away.

"Pardon me, sir," said his nephew, riding up, "but were you discreet to tell so much to that girl?"

The colonel looked at him, astonished.

"'Tis a new law, sir, to teach superiors discretion."

However, when his men were surprised and taken prisoners during the night he was forced to admit that he could not reconcile facts until the half-witted John came into view. Then he realized that he had been duped. 'Twas not the first time a pair of pretty eyes had taught the colonel wisdom.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTRODUCTION TO LIEUT. ANDREW FLETCHER.

HELENE paid a visit next morning to John's headquarters. After inquiries concerning her father's health were answered to the effect that results were most gratifying, she asked where the prisoners were. When Colonel Cranmer saw her she bowed low. Secretly, within her breast, she felt a little compunction and shame.

"And blessed them with a Congress!" she hummed, softly. Then, as she saw a shade of displeasure on John's face, she began:

"Really, Colonel Cranmer, at any other time I would say I was sorry. For a gentleman like you, *sans peur et sans reproche*, deserves better treatment. But, come now, confess, sir, wasn't it a clever bit of strategy?"

His silent regard was unendurable.

"Strategy! Yes, my lady; but 'tis a pity falsehoods come so quickly to such sweet red lips as yours."

She blushed.

"All is fair in love and war! Falsehoods are justifiable when they save country—or friend," with a look which sent the quick blood to John's face. "This gentleman is a true friend and loyal patriot and I—I like him. Oh, you heard me, sir? Strange! I forgot thou wert so near!"

This was so palpable a lie that even Cranmer joined in the laugh.

"I said yesterday that I would exchange places with the half-witted fellow to gain your favor. By Jove! I could, with truth, repeat it to-day. He's rather fortunate to recover his wits so speedily. I've lost what little I ever possessed. And then he stands high in a certain nameless maiden's favor, while I am ostracised, simply because I am a British officer. 'Tis the first time my uniform served me so shabby a trick. Ladies generally like the scarlet coat in spite of the man."

"You'll find, this side of the water, plenty of ladies who may reverse conditions, no doubt. I frankly acknowledge I'm of their number. To prove the truth of this, I shall come to see you often. I am, in a way, sadder than Niobe. My '*beaux yeux*,'" here her smile bubbled over into a tinkling laugh of amusement, "will be the color of your coat through weeping. *Avec tout mon*

An Introduction to Lieut. Fletcher. 81

ccour, I am sorry. And, will you forgive me? You see it was a choice between my 'half-witted friend,' Mr. Norris, and you."

"And you cling to old ties?"

"Yes, indeed. 'Tis well to be off with the old love, before you are on with the new," she sang. "'Tis a safe rule I always follow. To prove which I shall say good-bye and be off to my father, who is ill. Say you forgive me," she coaxed, as she held out a plump little palm.

He relented.

"I do indeed, but I won't forget you, and if I ever have an opportunity to retaliate, beware! Young lady, you're far too zealous a rebel to go at large." Then he ventured:

"What is your name, my dear?"

He was amazed at the sudden transformation brought about by his last two words. She swept past him and looked at John, who had glanced angrily up from the musket which he had been trying to make serviceable.

"Mr. Norris, will you kindly teach Colonel Cranmer my name? Then he will know how to address me hereafter," and with this farewell, with head held high and cheeks glowing with anger, she walked out of camp.

"The devil!" ejaculated the colonel. "How

those brown eyes snapped! I say, it's a queer life that girl leads. Is she—good?"

"My God!" exclaimed John, "how can any sane man have looked into her face and ask such a question?"

"I beg your pardon—and hers," said gallant Colonel Cranmer, as he lifted his hat.

While this had been going on, a young aide of Cranmer's, by name Andrew Fletcher, had been in the room, in company with a few of the American soldiers. John had noticed what Cranmer had failed to observe, that Fletcher's eyes had never left Helene's face from the moment of her entrance.

"Confound the girl!" thought John, "she hoodwinks them all," but he felt a twinge of jealousy, nevertheless. "After all, if her father wishes her to marry De Lancey, and she really wants him, it's none of my affair." But something within told John it was his affair, in spite of man's philosophy or woman's caprices.

As for Helene, who could tell? Changeful, coquettish, irresistible as she was, could she be capable of ardent, sustained affection for any one? For her father, yes. No daughter could do or be more. But yet—and there was Mary—with her gentle, beautiful eyes looking at him through her tears. She was steadfast as the

An Introduction to Lieut. Fletcher. 83

stars—of that he was certain. For true womanliness and grace and loveliness, yes, even beauty, Helene could not compare with her. So he shut out from his heart the girl who had just saved him from a prisoner's lot.

Not so Andrew Fletcher. The face of Helene haunted his waking and sleeping moments. He made inquiries about her and learned as much as the patriot soldiers knew. She was much esteemed by the men, a general favorite with young and old alike. She had nursed and served and cooked, carried messages and written letters, and even acted as an advisory committee for the whole. Few, indeed, did not owe her some favor.

So it happened that as she came, day after day, the young Briton grew to know her well. He was a handsome fellow, and as much to please herself as to provoke John, she professed a keen interest in his welfare. If he misconstrued, what then? It was none of her fault. Such things had happened before and would again. It was the way of the world, and nobody, certainly not she, was to blame. Besides, he could take care of himself, and, most assuredly, so could she.

In the spring there was an exchange of prisoners, and much to Fletcher's chagrin and Cranmer's joy, they were sent back to join the British forces. Helene met John the afternoon after

they had departed. Her father was now better and was again in active service.

"So our prisoners are gone. Alas! What will beguile my tedious moments now?" sighed the girl.

"What, indeed?" echoed John. "Helene, are you as heartless as you would have me think?" John had just cause for complaint of late. "That Fletcher is bound to you, body and soul."

"Say, rather, hand and foot, John. I find my own immortality quite all I can accommodate just at present. Upon *my* soul, I don't care to carry *his* soul on my shoulders—if that's where souls are supposed to be carried."

"Honestly, Helene, I don't like it," commented her admonisher, but he realized his error when she cut in with:

"Oh, I'm very sorry, but I really wasn't thinking whether you'd like it or not. Henceforth, when will you be in your private office? I'll come every day for advice and suggestions. How would this look:

"John Norris, Jr., formerly of Paulus Hook. Advisor for the Regiment. Special attention to young demoiselles in *affaires du coeur*. Terms: gratis."

"That's where you make a mistake. You really should charge a fee—or take toll at the door."

An Introduction to Lieut. Fletcher. 85

“Don’t be babyish, Helene,” he answered, testily. “That chatter is not so excruciatingly funny as it’s meant to be. At any rate, don’t waste it on an unappreciative clown like me.”

“Very well. Thanks for your courteous dismissal, monsieur. When you take the tone of *paterfamilias* and then change it to that of a morose old cynic, it’s time I withdrew.”

“Helene!” he called, as she drew her figure up with a great assumption of dignity and turned to leave.

“No one else ever says such nasty things to me as you do.”

Her face was turned away, but her voice trembled a little. John took a step nearer.

“Helene,” he spoke, in a softer tone, “I don’t wish to be cross with you. There’s no one I’d like to please as much as you, but this Fletcher is no good. I don’t like him and his reputation bears out my dislike. He’s no true man. You’ve wound him round and round your fingers. He’d desert for you.”

“How do you know?”

“I heard him say so—to you. And instead of telling him how hopeless his love was, you laughed. Fletcher may do some desperate thing. He is a knave, but he is no fool.”

“How do you know his case is hopeless?”

86 His Rebel Sweetheart.

“Well, I credit you with some sense. I’d rather throw you into De Lancey’s arms.”

“Thank you,” coldly, “I shan’t be *thrown* into anybody’s arms. When I want to go I’ll cuddle there of my own free will, with no assistance from you.”

“Helene, are you angry?”

“Oh, no!”

“I am sorry, my girl. I’ve no right to preach, but your welfare is very dear to me.”

“Is it, indeed? One would scarce think so.”

He could not tell now whether she were on the verge of laughter or tears.

“Yes, and you know it is, Helene. But why do you act so? I can’t think it’s just for the paltry pleasure of breaking men’s hearts.”

“I’d like to break *yours*,” exclaimed she, facing him, all smiles and dimples. “I’d like to break it into tiny, tiny bits.”

“That you never shall, my fine lady.” She laughed merrily.

“Oh, brave soldier!” and she assumed a martial air. “How like a martyr, in sooth! Now, just suppose you *had* a heart, and that I, poor little insignificant I, broke it into all these little atoms and molecules, do you know what I’d do?”

“Inter its fragments with due solemnity, I hope.”

An Introduction to Lieut. Fletcher. 87

“Non, non, monsieur, pas du tout. I would put all these fine bits together, making the same big heart I knew——”

“And broke,” put in John.

“Then I’d give it back to its owner with another heart, a little one all bruised and bleeding. ‘Then I know a girl who’d be the happiest in all these United Colonies.’”

“Helene, could it be yours?” And John’s deep voice grew singularly tender and vibrant.

“Mine!” laughed she, “how ridiculous!”

CHAPTER VII.

ONE CAPTURE AND TWO ESCAPES.

MARY might have become ill or her mind might have succumbed under the severe strain of constant feverish brooding and fear, had not something happened during the summer of 1776 to turn her attention away from herself and to bring her nearer to the young soldier who had left home more than a year before. A young boy had been captured by some British troops stationed at a fort some distance away, and valuable papers had been found in his possession. He had been brought to Mr. Norris' house for a more thorough investigation. Mary felt a thrill of pity as she met the glance of his handsome brown eyes. His bearing was far from cowardly, but the look he cast her way seemed timid and appealing. Mary was mystified, for there was something strangely familiar in his face. The cause soon became apparent, however. When they be-

One Capture and Two Escapes. 89

gan their search, the prisoner confessed that he had hitherto been a girl.

"Oho! Young rebel!" said the officer. "So you parade around at night in quest of adventures. You're pretty enough, I suppose, to find plenty."

A flash of passionate anger was her response.

"Mr. Norris and Miss Clarkson," she cried, "I appeal to you. Mr. Norris, I am under your roof and you are a gentleman. Am I to be subjected to insult? Miss Clarkson, you are a young woman yourself." And she turned quickly to Mary.

For answer the latter crossed the room, and quietly took one of Helene's small, burning hands in her own cool grasp. She smiled reassuringly and then cast a severe eye on the officer. He turned to the prisoner to avoid that steady gaze.

"What have you to say?" he demanded.

"I am dressed as a man, it is true," she said, "but I had a man's work to do, and I did it, too," she added, with a momentary gleam. "These papers don't amount to much," maliciously. "I swallowed the most important one when I saw you coming."

"While the young rebel is here," said John's father, with dignity, "she shall be treated with the courtesy due to her sex. Understand that,

please. My house is no public inn. You may take all the precaution you wish; you may rest assured she shall not go free, but I do not desire the repetition of such speeches. Furthermore, Miss Clarkson is present."

"Thank you, sir. I knew you——" she began impetuously, but he cut her off abruptly.

"Save your gratitude for your fine *patriot* friends," with a sneer. "I'll have none of it."

"Are you not the girl who was talking to John Norris in the woods that day?" asked Mary of Helene, the following morning.

"Yes. I am Helene," she answered, with a trace of sadness. Then, changing, "But let's be cheerful. What do you do all day?"

To this Mary responded, "Let's avoid that topic if we wish to be cheerful. John is in the rebel—in your army somewhere. Do you see him often?"

"He's under Lieutenant-Colonel Willett."

Helene cocked her head saucily on one side like a young robin.

"Yes, I've seen him," was the reply. "He was wounded at Bunker Hill. He's only a private yet. What's wrong?" as Mary turned pale. "Oh, he's better now, long ago. Works like a Trojan. I never saw such endurance before. Pray forgive me. I might have kept that intelligence to myself, knowing how badly you'd have felt. You

One Capture and Two Escapes. 91

were brought up like brother and sister, weren't you?"

"Yes," was the rather faint reply. The little rebel was quiet for a moment, then she remarked irrelevantly:

"I don't think he's very handsome, do you?" Mary raised her head quickly, but vouchsafed no answer.

"You should see some of our other men; the officers. Big General Washington, for example, with his gentleness and courtesy to ladies. He's an ideal."

"Or a demi-god," suggested Mary, in a tone she seldom took.

"John's nose and ears are too large," continued the prisoner, "and when he laughs, you'd think he was a dentist's sign."

"I like his smile," said the other, "and I never noticed his nose or ears."

"Fie! That's quite a reckless admission. Now that I think of it, did I not hear somebody say he thought you two rather more devoted than occasion demanded? Are you, now?"

"No—Oh—I don't know," was the odd reply. But Helene understood.

"Doesn't he scold and preach a deal? At least he does to me," she ventured archly.

"Oh, Helene, could you carry a message to him?" entreated the other.

"Not to-day," smiled the captive. "And I'd better not pledge you to-morrow, for I may have 'shuffled off this mortal coil' by that time."

"They won't kill you, surely?" and Mary looked piteously at her companion.

"Why not?"

"You're a woman and so young."

"Why, my dear, you don't know the officers of his Majesty, George III., God bless him and somebody else take him. I shocked you once before, did I not?" she laughed.

"Neither do *you* know them," she retorted, evidently not willing to be patronized by a girl in her teens. "There are plenty of them good and honorable."

"Yes, I know there are. I've seen some. Many of the subjects are better than their royal masters. The 'divine right of kings' forsooth. There's Colonel Cranmer," she continued, "a British officer and a gentleman to boot, if he does owe me a grudge."

And she told Mary the story of the capture, watching her face glow with pride as she mentioned John's connection with it.

"But war is war, Miss Clarkson, and I'll get my deserts unless I can manage to escape."

One Capture and Two Escapes. 93

Their eyes met. The question in those of the one was answered in the blue-gray depths of the other. Helene threw her arm around Mary's neck.

"If you help me I'll deliver your message to John Norris, if I perish myself," she cried.

"But how?" whispered the other, now keenly alive.

So these two plotted for hours. And they gave to the scheme the best that was in them. For were not their motives the best in the universe—love and liberty?

But the task was not easy. It was necessary to prevent any suspicion from falling on Mary, so she took little notice, apparently, of the prisoner, and allowed her to spend three days in comparative solitude. The day following, the officers expected her to appear before them to learn her fate. That night Mary retired at the usual hour, which was early, the bolts were fastened, and Helene's room was barricaded securely. Mr. Norris even went so far as to knock and obtain a response from within before he went to his own room.

Yet, notwithstanding all these precautions, in the morning the prisoner was missing. The house was in an uproar. Mary was closely questioned. Did she know where the rebel was? To which

she answered without hesitation, that she had not the remotest idea of the whereabouts of said prisoner; that she thought it strange since the room was locked and Mr. Fletcher, the sentinel, placed under Miss Rockwood's window, that suspicion should rest upon her; that she considered it an insult to Mr. Norris, who had ever been an ardent loyalist; that she regretted the fact that her best cloak had disappeared also; but that since the prisoner *had* escaped, Mary, for her part, hoped they would never find her. Then she added, illogically, that the little rebel was far too young and pretty.

"Not too young and pretty to be a little devil," answered the officer angrily. "I have just received intelligence that it was she who informed on General Howe in Boston. We'll set a price on her head."

Accordingly they placarded a notice offering a hundred pounds sterling for her capture.

When the sentinel was cross-examined, he declared that a man, whose face he could not see, had given the pass-word, and then had quickly overpowered him with some drug. When he had recovered consciousness it was early morning, and the prisoner had been gone some time. Fortunately for Fletcher, they were compelled to credit his story, as Miss Clarkson and the servant

One Capture and Two Escapes. 95

had found a towel in the yard, and had seen a man's footprint on the window-ledges; fortunately for Helene, the money offered as a reward remained in the military coffers of the British till the close of the war.

For many months Mary received no direct news from the girl whom she had helped to escape. When she went to the market in the mornings she heard discussed all the topics of the day. In this way she followed the campaigns of Washington, and Putnam, and Greene, read the inspired words of Jefferson and Adams, and even learned to smile at Franklin's ready wit. Occasionally, some of the boys, with whom she had always been a favorite, would give her some news of John. Thus she learned that he had been sent on a secret mission to Washington at Trenton, where he had been captured by the enemy. Later he had been exchanged and had assisted Lieut.-Col. Willett in the repulse of St. Leger from Fort Stanwix. Then, in October, the whole country rang with the news of Burgoyne's surrender. But of Helene she heard not a word until two years had passed.

Then one evening, near Christmas, a decrepit old woman followed her along the walk begging for alms. She stopped and took out her purse.

"Hush! Do you know me?" asked the beg-

gar. "I do flatter myself I'm quite a belle in these habiliments."

"Helene!" cried Mary.

"Keep still, for heaven's sake! I've kept my promise and brought you news."

"Of John?"

"Yes, it's taken more than a day, hasn't it? I couldn't have brought it now, only I was sent here with a message."

"Where's the letter?"

"It's not a letter. You'll see John, yourself. He's in New York now. He was sent by Colonel Willett on private business. Can you go there to-morrow?"

Mary eagerly assented.

"Go to Fraunces' Tavern, corner Pearl and Broad Streets. You'll see me there with an old man. When you come up I'll leave suddenly. Then you can speak to him. The old man will be John, you understand."

Accordingly, the following afternoon, Mary found herself ahead of time in front of the inn. Her heart gave a wild bound as she caught sight of two beggars, saying no words, but petitioning for alms of the soldiers who passed out and in.

Suddenly, the woman disappeared; and uttering one cry the man threw off his disguise.

One Capture and Two Escapes. 97

Mary almost fainted. No John this, but a red-coated officer.

“Catch that girl!” he called in his excitement. Rough hands were laid on Mary.

“I don’t mean her—the other one.”

People looked in vain for another girl.

“The old woman! She was disguised!” at length coming to his senses. “She went in there!” pointing to Fraunces’.

Search was made, but she had vanished. Every nook and corner of the tavern was known to her. Whether she had secreted herself and made good her escape later, or whether she had passed immediately out by one of the back doors, no one ever knew.

Mary was known to one of the officers. She gave him a message from Mr. Norris, and so was released. As she passed out she heard the disguised Briton say:

“Why, that girl is a limb of Satan. She has done more mischief than a hundred men. Such reckless bravery I never saw. She’s young, too, and deucedly handsome. So much so, that she turns the heads of all our men when they catch her. She’s more than once effected escape that way. She had planned to meet one of Willett’s captains here on business. I intercepted

one of her letters, the vixen. They say the fellow is her lover."

Half dazed, Mary returned home. Over and over mechanically she muttered:

"They say the fellow is her lover." All the events which had transpired were but a background for these words. In vivid scarlet they shone, then they turned to blue, a queer shade of turquoise. It was all so strange. She saw the colors dissolve themselves into the stars and stripes; but John's face, dreadfully scarred and pale, was in one corner, and in the other was a laughing profile surmounted with clusters of dark curls. She never remembered how she reached home, but for many months she tossed on her bed between life and death. During that time Mr. Norris seemed to undergo a complete metamorphosis. With the solicitude of a father he lingered around the sick girl, but, even after her recovery, he never quite learned the cause of her sudden and almost fatal illness.

CHAPTER VIII.

HELENE'S RESCUE.

AFTER Fletcher had assisted in Helene's escape, she had eluded her enemies, and during the hardships of the awful winter of 1777, had shown, indeed, that the blood of a long line of knightly ancestors did not course through her viens for naught. Repeatedly, she had travelled the twenty miles between Valley Forge and Philadelphia, knowing full well the penalty she would have paid if fortune had not favored her.

One day she came face to face with Colonel Cranmer on the street. She was disguised as the daughter of a washerwoman, and was trudging along beside her foster mother, a poor, old woman, whom she had hired as a maternal progenitor provided her mouth be kept shut and her pocket open. Cranmer looked carelessly while Helene stopped to rearrange her clothes. Then he halted.

"Examine these baskets," he said to one of his staff. There was nothing in them but soiled

linen. Helene was too clever to make a stupid blunder. The colonel apologized.

"I am very sorry, madam, but so many people carry concealed messages to the enemy, we are obliged to be careful. Is this your daughter?"

"Yes, sir," and Helene looked quickly up and down again.

"By Jove!" she heard the colonel mutter in a puzzled way. "Is that all, sir?" she asked, dropping a curtsey.

"Oh, yes, of course," he replied, aroused from his meditations. Helene had an uncanny presentiment that they might lead to her identification.

"Here's a shilling. Be good to your old mother, girl. We have but one, you know."

"God bless you, sir," said the old woman, finding her voice at the sight of the coin, and, for other reasons, Helene heartily endorsed the prayer. So much so, that she resolved to dissolve partnership as soon as possible.

She looked carefully, yet stealthily, at the English soldiers about the streets. There were no familiar faces there. She turned down a side street, dismissed her "relative," bundle and all, with a shilling as benediction, breathed a sigh of relief, and jumped with apprehension as a man's voice sounded close to her ear:

"So I wasn't mistaken, after all! Turn about

is fair play,' even though your sex demands the contrary. 'All is fair in love and war,' too, *on dit*. That is a trite saying, I admit, but I have Miss Rockwood as authority for its adaptability." And Colonel Cranmer stood beside her.

Her heart stood still and the pretty face was piteous in its plight. The colonel pulled hard at his whiskers, and bit his lip.

"Oh, Colonel Cranmer, don't take me to General Howe!"

"Why?" There was the suspicion of a smile under his iron-gray mustache.

"I'm afraid of him," she faltered.

"Afraid!" he laughed aloud. "I didn't think that you were afraid of—pardon my expression—of the devil himself."

"But General Howe isn't the devil," she said, demurely.

"No, we Britishers don't think so," he observed. "But, bless you, child, you need have no fear of Howe. He's fond of pretty young women—rebels included. Just cajole him as you did me."

"Oh, Colonel Cranmer, I'm sorry," she pleaded. "Not that I took you prisoner, though, for you're exchanged now to wage war against those I love."

"Your half-witted friends," suggested the Colonel. She tried her last throw. She knew his

vulnerable places, but she builded better than she knew when she ventured:

“But, Colonel Cranmer, you’re a gentleman and a good friend. That’s the reason I’m sorry. If it had been some others”—and she left a significant pause. “I told Miss Clarkson all about you,” she added, lamely.

“Miss Clarkson! Not Mr. Norris’ ward in Paulus Hook?”

“Yes, do you know her?” exclaimed Helene eagerly. Here at last was a hope.

“Know her! Yes, I’ve met her, and, Miss Rockwood—can I trust you?”

“Try me,” cried she, excitedly. She was really anxious to please Colonel Cranmer, for his own sake.

“That is,” she qualified her promise, “provided it be not a war secret. I couldn’t keep that, I know.”

But something in his manner told her that it was not.

“Will you promise me to keep on saying nice things about me to Miss Clarkson, whenever you can? Of course, don’t perjure yourself,” he smiled.

“Do you—” she began, hesitated, then began anew: “I didn’t know that you—that she——” He laughed.

"She doesn't, but I do, Miss Helene, and we shall call the score even, if you do me this favor."

"And let me go?" queried the prisoner.

"That I could not. You know how it is. I should betray my uniform—but stay! I shall let you go if you make me one other promise."

"And that is?"

"Not to mix up in this war business any more."

She was tempted and stood a moment in thought. It would be nice just to help her father, who was now so ill, but after he died—and what would the camp say?

"I couldn't, Colonel Cranmer," she said simply. "So you may as well take your prisoner to my Lord Howe."

"My dear girl, this is a painful duty. But you may trust me to do my utmost to secure a release promptly. Have you any messages about you now?"

"No," her lips were tight. He laid a hand on her shoulder.

"Give it to me. I will make it easier for you." She looked at him quickly and then again replied in the negative.

"Very well," he said, a trifle annoyed. "You will be searched later."

He stood with a lighted cigar between his fingers and eyed her.

"I'm sorry, my girl. I give you my word of honor to do all I can to help you, but you're foolish not to give it up."

"How do you know I have a message?" she queried, nervously fingering her handkerchief. She stood close beside him, and for a second laid her hand on his.

"I shall give it to you in a moment," she said, as she put her hand behind her back. In another instant he saw a little column of smoke rising.

"There's something burning!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Why, it's my handkerchief!" remarked the captive with a Spartan smile.

"Throw it away!" he demanded imperiously. "What is the matter with you? I don't understand you at times."

For reply she opened her hand and displayed a little palm quite scarred and blistered. Offering him the ashes, with another peculiar smile, she murmured:

"My message, Colonel Cranmer."

Then he understood.

The prisoner had caused quite a sensation at the British headquarters. When searched no word of any description was found upon her person. Her friends were many, and as they included many high officials, her lot was an easy one. A

sharp surveillance was, nevertheless, kept upon her, for they well understood her value to their enemy. She tried bribery and strategy, but in neither was she successful. So she determined to apparently rest contented and bide her time. Her peace of mind was sorely taxed, however, for while the distance between the armies was so small, yet no news came to her of her father, or John. She could not even discover what General Washington was about. And as she gleaned, one by one, confidential secrets, her feet were wildly impatient to be again on the road to Valley Forge.

She sat by the window of her room, a far more beautifully appointed one than she would have dreamed of, had she been with her friends, one afternoon in the latter part of the winter, and thought sadly of those absent ones. Her silent cry of late had been:

“How can I stay here, in this luxury, and think of them all dying of starvation so short a distance away?” This heart moan rose to her now, and she choked back a sob.

“Perhaps father is dead,” she was thinking, when a loud knock aroused her from her gloomy forebodings. The sentinel who paced back and forth, day by day, called:

“Mistress Rockwood.”

She opened the door to receive a letter. It proved to be an invitation from General Howe, for a ball to be given the following evening. She re-read it scornfully.

“A fit subject am I for a ball. I’ll send my Lord Howe my regrets, and yet—what is this? ‘Come.’ Who wrote this word ‘Come’? And ‘A. F.’ too?—Andrew Fletcher. Oh, there’s something to be hoped for, yet. Go? I think I shall! I’ll go and be so gay they’ll think I never wish to leave them. Go? Nothing on earth will afford me so much pleasure, my lord, and so I’ll write thee,” and she kissed her hand to her own fair face reflected in the mirror.

“And I’ll dance till I’m dying, if I can but manage to get a word with Mr. Fletcher. This is good of him, indeed, and John warned me! He’s but jealous. Go? *Avec plaisir.* Oh, Monsieur Howe, he is one ‘*bon homme.*’”

And she danced around the room from sheer excess of joy and buoyant hope, a reflex action from the experience of the preceding few weeks.

When Helene entered the ball room, all eyes were turned in her direction. Her extreme youth, her beauty, her daring recklessness and audacious bravery had all been well extolled. This one pointed to her as Howe’s informant; the other as the girl who had caused Colonel Cranmer’s

arrest. She was the confidante of Washington, the nurse of the rebel army, and at the same time, a seeming paradox, the friend of many of her enemies.

She smiled and chatted, gay and vivacious; a glance here, a word there, a consummate flirt and actress everywhere. She had one smile for the old ladies, it was gentle and winning; another for their daughters, free from envy, friendly and sincere; and still another for the men which—but here mere language, a dry symbolism, proclaims its inadequacy.

“I hate you, gentlemen, every one,” Colonel Cranmer heard her say to an admiring group, as he came up.

“Why, Miss Helene, such lips were never moulded to frame such cruel words as these,” he remarked. She looked at him with softening eyes.

“I can’t help liking you individually at times, but I hate you just now.”

“Why?” and he looked well over his shining suit and epaulets, his silver sword and velvet breeches.

“Because, *Mr. Cranmer, my Philip Sidney—* bow, if you please—is now *Colonel Cranmer*, armed in the regimentals of His Gracious Majesty, George III.”

Her little hand rose and fell with the inflections on the last phrase. Then she added, as was her wont, very slowly:

“God bless him. He needs my prayers. I say again, God bless him. I hope he doesn’t go where he deserves after death. ’Twere impossible, *‘mes amis,’* for me to breathe a holier wish than that.”

“Well, well, and here’s our pretty little rebel,” and the aides made way for the general himself.

“I have been uttering seditious words, my lord, trying vainly to make your gallant men prove traitors to their just and noble cause.”

“Come, come, my dear young lady, why waste your time so foolishly? Here’s the best floor and the finest music that can be procured in this barren land. Won’t you honor me with a dance?”

So he led her out to the entrancing strains of the dear, delightful, stately minuet.

Nor was Helene proof against these allurements. She felt the distinction keenly, and her spirits rose accordingly. She was ever at her best when she had the admiration of the many. *Bon mots* and epigrams came then by inspiration.

After General Howe had led her to her seat, her eyes sought out Colonel Cranmer. He came over.

“I was afraid to ask so charming a belle, in the

presence of so many younger men," he said gallantly.

She laughed.

"Colonel, I am your prisoner."

"I wish all prisoners were alike," sounded a voice beside her, which she immediately recognized as Fletcher's.

Somehow, in spite of the fact that it was to him she looked for succor, in spite of the truth which suddenly flashed itself upon her, that he had never before looked so handsome, or so clever, in spite, too, of the fact that she had been on the *qui vive* all evening for his appearance, his voice now grated on her harshly.

"A traitor can never hope to gain respect or love even from those for whom he betrays all. In that he is like a woman." So she reasoned, but, at the same time, she smiled brightly.

"I shall dance with you later, Lieutenant Fletcher," she said, "that is, if you wish it so."

His eyes burned with a response that made her wish to recall her words.

"I thought my time would never come," he said, as, after a while, they stood up together.

"You were not more impatient than I," she answered. "Now tell me, what news?"

"I love you," he said.

She stamped her little slipper in vexation.

110 His Rebel Sweetheart.

“If that be why you said ‘Come,’ I should have remained long away,” she retorted.

“Have you nothing better to say?”

He frowned angrily, but she noticed the tight lips drawn with pain, and relented.

“I thought you, at least, might prove a friend in this nest of enemies and lend me your wings to fly away with.”

“Why me?” he asked. “Because I helped you once before?”

“No, but because you say you love me,” she answered simply.

“I was suspected before, Helene.”

She looked up in surprise. It was the first time he had ever called her thus. But she said nothing. He pretended not to notice her glance and went on:

“I could not do it again, unless——”

“What?”

He whispered hoarsely:

“Unless I deserted.”

“Well?” She contrived to say it coldly.

“Helene, I will, for you. There is nothing in heaven or hell I wouldn’t do for you. But we must go together,” he went on quickly, “everything will be ready. Horses and all. I have hired one man and drugged another. Will you

come? Yes or no? Here comes Colonel Cranmer."

Without a thought save that of flight the affirmative word was given. It was a small word, but for Helene, as for many other women, it was fraught with a whole world of possibilities, good and bad.

"When this is over, go to your room," advised Fletcher, his deep-set, dark eyes aglow. "I have a ladder convenient. Now, my little actress, go on with your part." She could have choked him for his glib use of the personal pronoun; instead, she schooled herself to obey his command. Sufficient unto the moment was the evil thereof. Not a thought gave she to what the final end might be.

Wine had been imbibed freely, and toward morning many of the soldiers were unfit for service.

"'Twill help us better," thought she, as she glanced with a little curl of her lip at the merry-makers. The fun was at its height. One of the revelers who had been at Helene's elbow all evening called for a speech. On all sides the echo sounded:

"A speech! A speech! Miss Rockwood!"

She hesitated, then, ever a child of impulse, flung aside all prudence and discretion. She

caught sight of Fletcher at the other end of the room, eager, nervous, smiling with his lips in a restless way at the ladies near, and ever seeking her with his eyes. He looked darkly now, and shook his head in disapproval. After that, if it cost her her freedom, Helene resolved to go ahead. He, of all men, should not dictate to her. Ah, Helene, Helene!

“There is only one theme, ladies and gentlemen, that arises to my thoughts and lips to-night—it is—the enemy—yours, not mine. I have feasted here, thanks to General Howe, and our gallant Colonel Cranmer,” with a bright little nod in his direction, “and have laughed and talked and been merry, *apparently*. The truth is, friends, that my heart has been oppressed and sad beyond the power of my poor words to tell. I looked around on beautiful gowns of lace and satin, on velvets and silken hose and silver buckles; I have heard the sweet strains of inspiring music, and sipped nectar and ambrosia. A scene fit for the gods truly.” She took all in, with a comprehensive glance of her large, dark eyes, now filled to overflowing. Around her had gathered the giddy dancers, but smiles had vanished quite. The silence was as that of the stilly night without.

“On what did I think, gentlemen, soldiers of

the king?" She paused. Every ear was strained to catch the answer.

"Let me tell you, if I may. I thought of General Washington, and his little army of patriots, among whom I have the honor to number my aged father, and I contrasted their present lot with mine. Could anything have been more appalling? On the one hand, dire poverty and suffering, footprints marked with red life blood through the freezing snow; on the other side, music and dancing, brightness and lightness. Your uniforms are resplendent, your ladies are burdened with ribbons and laces, jewels shine with regal grace. Gentlemen, I overheard one lady say to-night:

"How can she dance with so light a heart, when the rebels, for whom she *professes* so much sympathy, are dying of cold and starvation?" I do not blame her, indeed I do not, but her accusations sting. She may hear me now. To her and to you all I give this message and warning:

"My heart, heavy with sorrow, in spite of the mask it has worn, counts its every throb a prayer to God for my people's deliverance. If I ever escape from here,—"

She saw Fletcher who had edged his way nearer give a start of surprise and annoyance, and was sincerely glad of it. As the night wore on his

presence was becoming more and more distasteful. She continued:

“But escape seems far away, indeed. You have nobly provided against such. But if I ever leave here, I shall again serve General Washington’s little band in every conceivable way, and you will think of me then, my friends, not as a mere child pleased with such baubles as these,” and she flung from her an ivory fan, “but as a woman pleading for, working for, loving our noble cause of Liberty. And it will triumph yet—for ye know not the men with whom ye deal.”

“But we know the women, and by St. George! if the men are made flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, not all of our boasted power can subdue them.”

It was Cranmer who spoke and each soldier present felt the truth of what he said.

“Bravo!” cried another officer. “Our little rebel pleads loyally. We may yet forsake our ranks.”

Helene glanced inadvertently toward Fletcher. A few moments later the merrymakers dispersed. Helene hurried to her room. She softly opened the casements and peered out into the darkness. The ladder was there, hidden by sheltering trees.

The sentinel was nowhere to be found.

“Drugged,” thought she, and with a shudder

she wondered if her confederate would stop at murder, to gain his point.

A whisper came from below.

"Art ready?"

Her voice sounded strange to herself, and a nameless fear came upon her, the fearless one, as she replied. She shuddered, but not with the cold, though the night was bitter. She fell on her knees by the open window and breathed a brief prayer for safe deliverance. It had been a custom since early childhood, but never before had she felt its awful necessity as now.

"Come! come quickly!" rose from below. She drew her long cloak about her, felt to see if her money was safe, and descended rapidly.

"At last, Helene!" was all he said, but something in the tone made her all but determined to turn and go back. And then, for the first time, a dreadful thought came to her. Howe, at least, treated her with respect and courtesy. She was leaving his protection for what? She hardly knew. What she did realize was that the man by her side was unscrupulous and that he loved her. She despised herself now, for gaining his affection. Still, he would not dare—he could not. These strange fancies flitted across her mind as she hurried on, past half-drunken or drugged men,

she knew not which, until they came to the place where two horses stood, already saddled.

Fletcher led the way, holding his hand on her bridle. They started on the road to Valley Forge, and her heart beat wild with hope.

“After all, how good he is!” was her reflection. And she felt keenly the injustice she had done him in her thoughts.

After some miles’ riding in almost absolute silence they came to a crossroad. Her companion turned quickly and touched the horse smartly with his whip. She tried to curb it, but when she had succeeded they were some distance on the other road.

“Where are we going?” she asked, sharply.

Every turn in these highways for miles around was well known to her.

“Are you tired, dear?” he asked, softly, in reply.

“Tired!” she exclaimed angrily. “No, only when you make me so. I thought you were going to take me to Valley Forge.”

In her effort to keep her voice steady its notes sounded unduly harsh.

Now he knew she had had that impression, but he feigned great astonishment.

“To Valley Forge! Why, Helene, my little one, you don’t know what you’re saying. How

could I, a British officer, take you to the enemy's headquarters?"

"Where else should you take me?" demanded she, thoroughly frightened and angry, "my father is there and the only friends I have."

She felt a sudden wave of hot blood surge over her, in spite of the frost and cold.

"Your best friend in the world is here," he answered, leaning so close over his saddle that she felt his warm breath in her face. "You have left all for me, and you know it. I have left all for you. You know that, too. Now, my darling, make the best of it, or you lose your honor and I lose mine."

Great danger made her strong.

"Do you dare, sirrah, to breathe these words to me here—and now? Leave me, I say. Go, and leave me. I have no fear of the darkness, nor the cold: aye, and no fear of you, sir, either. Not one step further shall my horse stir unless its head be turned to where my dying father awaits me. *Your* honor," she cried. "Since when have *you* had honor, pray? Lieutenant Fletcher, 'twill take a vastly different man than you to make me risk *my* honor."

But she realized for the first time that she had already done so. He placed his hand firmly on her shoulder.

"Listen, Helene. Your words are very kind and grateful, but they are untrue. I can forgive you all, yes, all and a thousand times more, because I love you, body and spirit. Can you not see and feel it? I have waited so long for my time to come. You seemed to belong to everybody but me. Now," he cried, in an ecstacy of triumph and exultation, "you belong to me, and me alone. And, oh, Helene, if you only knew my excess of love, you could not remain so cold. I love you! I love you! That is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things for me. Honor, loyalty and friends, country and religion; fortune and fame—these would I gladly give up for one kiss. Oh, Helene!" and his hand closed like a live coal over her icy one, and held it in a painful grasp. Drops of perspiration broke out on her forehead, but she resolved he should not know her fear. She knew now that her previous tone was unwise.

"Mr. Fletcher, *please* be reasonable. Why don't we go to Valley Forge? We'll spend so long here that some one will find us, and it will go harder with you than with me. You know that."

"I'm not afraid," he said. "There is no danger I would not brave for you."

She acknowledged to herself, that, with all his faults and vices, cowardice was not one of them. She wished it were.

"My father will rejoice to see me again, and every one will thank and bless you for my safe deliverance. You know what they think of me at Valley Forge. As for me," and she let her voice grow almost tender, "I shall be so grateful that all my life——"

But he broke in with a sneer.

"Thanks. Do you stop to consider what I've risked for you? Why, Helene, man could not do more. I don't want your father's thanks, nor your gratitude. Gratitude! In return for what I offer? Why, girl, you must be mad."

"No, but you are," she returned coolly.

"Come, we'll have no more of this," commanded Fletcher. "Mine you are, Helene Rockwood. You are mine, body and soul, by your own free will this night. Come, my sweetheart, let us forget all else and love each other."

"My God in Heaven, how I hate you!" exclaimed the girl.

And, "My God in Heaven, how I love you," answered the man. "If you come with me I shall marry you and love you always. I have everything planned. If you don't come, why, by the Lord, you'll wish you had. And so will your father, and——John Norris. You'd go with him quickly enough, even though no marriage certificate were in sight."

She raised herself up suddenly, jerking herself free, and struck him full in the face with her whip.

“You cur!” she muttered, white with intense anger and fear, then dashed forward and left him in the distance.

She hoped now that his pain would prevent pursuit. She had aimed at his eyes. Perhaps he could not see to follow. But this proved to be a forlorn hope. Not one cry of pain had escaped him, but she heard his horse galloping in the rear. Wildly she rode. The night air whistled. The branches creaked, while, under the horses’ hoofs, the white snow gleamed. She cast her eyes to the blue star-studded heights above. Nearer and nearer came the dread sound. She could not think; she could not pray. Finally, in a half swoon, she felt his hand on her arm. Her horse stopped abruptly. Its strength, as well as hers, was about spent.

“Helene,” came the terrible whisper beside her, “you shall pay, and pay dearly for this.”

He sprang to the ground and lifted her from the saddle.

“And this is my pay, and this,” he cried exultantly, as she felt his triumphant kisses on her cheeks and lips.

Half-fainting with fright and fear and horror

her screams rang on the still air. He seemed to take a strange satisfaction therein.

"Sing away, my lady; your flute-like tones make small harmony here."

"I think you are a devil incarnate. Can't you have some pity? I will do anything——"

"But love me," he finished. "No, Helene, you shall learn what it means to trifle with me. Small pity, indeed, you had in your power. Less shall I have in mine. I have sworn that no other man shall ever possess you, and I intend to keep my vow. Devil or man—or man-devil—there are plenty such, you know, I may be, but for all that I am having my share of Heaven now."

She tried to cry aloud but his lips closed over hers. Then a gleam of steel made her hope. She might yet kill herself, or him. She groped for his sword, but he divined her motive and caught her arm.

"Helene, my Helene, at last, in spite of man or God or devil!" he cried in a frenzy, and still more wildly rang out her agonized cry:

"Help, oh, my God and Savior! Help!"

Hark! For there came, as in answer from Heaven, the sound of horses' hoofs on the highway. They both heard, and, with one impulse, strained their ears.

"Help! Help!" came again the cry before Fletcher could cover her mouth with his hands.

A voiceless prayer rose to the girl's lips as her captor tried to lift her into his saddle. She struggled with all her remaining strength, knowing full well it would be her last chance. She heard the hoofs approach and then began to die away. They were on the road above. With a superhuman effort, born of the moment, she wrenched herself free. Then rang out close to Fletcher's ears the sound of a prolonged whistle, loud, clear and distinct. Helene had often used it before, as a warning to the patriot men.

Then men's voices seemed to call to each other, but to Helene they appeared far, far away. She realized now that her strength and vitality had ebbed away. With a last awful prayer to the God of Innocence, for the first time in her bright, healthy young life, she lost consciousness.

And now she was dreaming. She was again a little girl, out in the fields, picking flowers. Everything was sunny and bright, but soon the snow began to fall. She became cold and shivered. But somebody came and put a blanket over her and made her warm and comfortable. She looked up and saw a man's figure.

"Thank you, father," she said. But the man replied rather sadly:

"I am not your father," and she recognized John Norris.

With a cry she sprang up.

"Am I dreaming? Where am I? Who is here? He!" with a shudder.

But an arm was placed around her head to support her, and as if in answer to her dreams, the face of John Norris, white, drawn, and haggard, bended above her own.

"John," she called in an agony of relief and affection.

"Oh, how good! how good! My God, how good of Thee!" she moaned over and over as the horrible memory of her nightmare passed over her. He it was, then, who had rescued her. Her incoherency gave way to a frightful burst of weeping. She sobbed and clung to John, begging him never to leave her, and he gave her his promise, with lips white and bloodless.

It was hours before she became calm but she finally fell into a deep slumber. When she awoke the sun was high and they were riding near Valley Forge.

"Are we going home, John?" she asked. He turned away his head.

"How is father?" she went on.

John, with head still averted, replied:

"He's not been well, you know, Helene, the cold——"

"Now that I've come back he'll be better. Oh, I long to see him."

"You cannot see him for some time, my dear girl," said John, very gently. "He's not strong, and as for you—" Here he tenderly lifted her small hand and looked at the thin fingers.

"John," she asked presently, "how did it happen? And where is—he?"

"He," replied John, "is lying on the road dead or alive, I don't know, and don't care. I was—oh, my precious, precious little girl," he broke off wildly, as he clasped both her little hands in one strong grasp, "how can I ever thank the Lord enough?"

"And how can I, John?" she queried simply, raising her hand and stroking the hair on his forehead. He flushed under the brown of his thin cheeks.

"John," she commanded, "lean down your head. I have something to tell you," and before he had obeyed she had kissed him once on the lips.

"I cannot thank you any other way, my dear, dear John. Oh, in all the world, there is no one else so good as thou."

Then, ever so tenderly and gently, he folded her in his arms.

"Helene, you do not doubt my love now, do you?"

Her only answer was a smile. Not the old capricious one, but a new one—one which had but sprung into life that moment; and John lost himself within it and caught a glimpse far beyond into the golden portals of Paradise.

Then John told this story.

"Colonel Willett sent me yesterday to inspect the enemy's quarters. He had heard of Howe's ball. I thought of you all the way and wondered if you had forgotten us. I could not gain access to their camp, but I found out a number of things, and waited along the outskirts thinking later the soldiers might be drunk. Many of them were, but one vigilant sentinel barred my entrance. Finally, when the night was well over, I resolved to return with what news I had. On the other highway I thought I heard a woman's scream, little dreaming, my Helene, that it was you. We listened, my companion and I, but everything was quiet and peaceful, apparently. My comrade suggested that it might be the howling of the wind, so we passed on.

"Then came something that froze the very marrow in my bones. When I heard that whistle, Helene, not all the demons in hell could have stopped me, for I recognized it as yours. I dashed

over everything that came in my way, calling Thompson to follow, until I came up to that brute and to you. He may be dead now, curse him. I almost hope he is. But, Helene, my little one, how in the name of Heaven did you happen to be with him?"

Then she told all that had transpired to lead up to the proposed escape.

"You know the rest," she said. "John, let us forget it. But, *mon pauvre garcon*, how thin you are. I believe you are half starved."

But he emphatically denied this. They decided to say as little as possible in camp, but Thompson had ridden on ahead and told all; and it is safe to say had Fletcher come within rifle range of any of the American soldiers, Helene would have been amply revenged.

To Washington she became invaluable, as her eyes and ears had been open to some purpose while away. But her fright and its attendant nervous strain told, and for months she suffered from a slow fever. During this time she was frequently delirious, and no one could soothe her as well as John.

CHAPTER IX.

DE LANCEY AGAIN ON THE SCENE.

ONE spring day Helene was learning anew to walk. John came to her and asked if she were strong enough to hear some sad news.

“Dear John, I know what it is,” she replied. “Do you think I would have been ill so long, and he would never have come to see me? Poor, dear old father. When did he die?”

“While you were in Philadelphia,” he answered, relieved to think the intelligence would cause no greater strain.

“He put you under my care, Helene, as he did once before, some time ago. Do you recollect? So you must do as I command.”

He spoke gaily, though his heart was sore and heavy, as were all the other patriots at that time.

“I shall always do as you wish, John. Dear old John, how good you are!”

"‘Good and old.’ I never hoped to hear such adjectives applied to me,” murmured he.

“I mean it, John, do not laugh. You’ve been a very angel to me—have you not saved me from worse than death? Oh!” and she shuddered, “were I your slave for life, I could not repay you. Whenever I think of it I——”

“Then do not think of it, Helene. Why, my girl,” for she had broken down utterly, and was sobbing hysterically.

“I feel that I was a great deal to blame. You often warned me about him and scolded me, and I liked you all the better for it, while I never liked him, and yet I let him care for me. I hope he has escaped. I would never forgive myself, John, if his blood were on your hands. Then you would have sinned as well as he, and, God help me! I would have been responsible for both.”

Gentle and patient, indeed, was the treatment Helene required and received. She would lie on her couch and gaze at the poor, bare walls and rude furniture and think of the British in pomp and state so near. Then a fierce desire would seize her to be up and doing for her people. She felt the death of her father keenly, and yet she could never remember before having been so happy. She would listen for each footfall in the halls and could distinguish John’s the minute

De Lancey Again on the Scene. 129

it crossed the threshold. She hardly asked herself the cause of her great peace of soul, but just allowed herself to drift along with the smooth in-coming tides.

However, as she gradually regained strength a change came about. John had been hurriedly sent on a secret mission to another camp, and James De Lancey and some others had been stationed in his place.

De Lancey met Helene one day during one of the few periods of recreation allowed him, for he had proven himself too valuable and indefatigable to be kept from duty long. Her reception was very cordial, for he had always been a favorite, and it seemed especially good now to meet him again after his protracted absence. Then, too, John's abrupt departure had left a void, a lack of purpose, which nothing seemed to fill.

De Lancey congratulated her warmly on her success as a soldier, and on her recent convalescence. Helene asked if he had heard the particulars of her escape from General Howe.

"Yes, Norris was always a lucky dog," was his grim reply.

"Have you ever heard what became of Lieutenant Fletcher?" she questioned.

"Why, I heard he was dead. I thought you knew."

130 His Rebel Sweetheart.

“Dead!” echoed she, with changing color.
“Did—did John kill him?”

De Lancey noticed the transition, and his dark eyes tried to read hers.

“What makes you ask?”

“Because John left him lying in the ditch.
Oh, John didn’t do it, did he?”

“Who knows?” replied the other, with a shrug.
“Where is Norris now?”

“I don’t know,” she admitted, not without a blush.

“I can tell you,” said De Lancey. “Of course you’ll be interested. It’s strange he didn’t tell you himself.”

“I don’t care to know,” said Helene, icily.

She had thought it strange, too, and had felt not a little hurt. But she was well versed in the ways of war, and so made excuses.

“I was surprised to hear he had gone to see Miss Clarkson—with a special message, so they said.”

“But she is a Tory,” protested Helene.

“Yes?” and the rising inflection was indicative of volumes. “Well, perhaps this secret message doesn’t pertain to our present struggle.”

This remark was half to himself, but it came back frequently to Helene during the course of the next few weeks.

De Lancey Again on the Scene. 131

She had asked General Willett about John's errand, and learned that, if successful, he was probably now near his old home. No one knew when he would be back.

She was thankful now that her regained strength made an active life once more possible. Useful work, that great healer of all ills, alone made bearable her existence.

De Lancey was kind and considerate always, but her affection for John had grown to such proportions that she could only remember De Lancey now as the bearer of unpleasant news about him.

So the year of 1778 wore away—a year full of hardship and suffering to the patriots. The battle of Saratoga, one of the fifteen decisive battles of the world, had been won just before this year had been ushered in. France, Spain and Holland had acknowledged the independence of the States. Clinton had succeeded Howe in Philadelphia. Helene had been gradually working her way towards Paulus Hook, doing any incidental work she could, spying and sending messages back to Washington, who was then hurrying after Clinton.

It was at this time she conceived the idea of disguise in order to keep her promise to Mary Clarkson. She had learned that John had not

yet made his entry into Paulus Hook, and that he would probably risk his life by doing so. It had cost Helene something to arrange matters as she had done, but she had had no idea that any of her letters had been intercepted. The almost disastrous results of her well-planned scheme made her, for a time, at least, more cautious.

After she had escaped from the trap which had been set by she knew not whom, she escaped from New York and started in a southerly direction. Wondering how Miss Clarkson fared, and pitying her in her disappointment, she hoped to get back to the main portion of the army by a circuitous route. This she found would be, for a time, impracticable, if not totally impossible.

Fortunately, at this juncture, she met an old friend, Miss Atwood, who was a well-known Tory sympathizer. At her house she found a safe retreat. After she had kept well within doors for some weeks, her natural instincts made Helene risk attention by reconnoitering a little near Miss Atwood's estate.

It was early in the morning and Miss Atwood accompanied her. They cantered briskly for some time and presently came to a clearing in the thicket. Miss Atwood halted.

"What is the matter, Helene?" she asked, as

De Lancey Again on the Scene. 133

she spied a number of red-coated soldiers drawn up in line.

They stood shoulder to shoulder, a fine-looking body of men, with the beautiful golden sunlight shining on their fresh, unspotted uniforms.

"A desertion, is it not?" asked Helene. "You see they are blindfolded."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Miss Atwood.

"Yes, poor fellow indeed," echoed Helene.

And then her military training prompted her to add: "But he deserves it. 'Tis a shameful thing—oh, my God!" she broke off wildly.

"What ails you?" asked her companion, stretching out her arm as she saw her sway.

"I know him," whispered Helene, hoarsely.

"Which one? Let's go back. They haven't seen you. They wouldn't recognize you anyway. Which one is it? Colonel Hobson?"

"No, oh, may the good Lord in heaven have mercy on his soul."

She tightened her fingers over her ears as the shot rang out.

"It was the fellow they shot I knew. Did you ever meet him? His name was Fletcher."

So, sick at heart, the two maidens turned their horses' heads toward home. Helene told her story on the way; and just as soon as feasible started off with poor Fletcher's death-knell ring-

ing in her ears. For two things she was grateful: The prisoner had been spared the humiliation and ignominy of knowing who were the eye-witnesses to his disgrace; and John, in spite of all, had no man's blood on his hands. But why had James De Lancey told the lie?

CHAPTER X.

A LOYALIST VISITOR FOR A REBEL PRISONER.

MARY had in all these years talked to John but once. Toward the close of the war he had been taken prisoner near New York, and Mary at her home had heard the news.

With Colonel Cranmer she travelled into the city, letting him partially into the secret. A meeting was arranged, and on Mary's word of honor as a sympathizer with the kingly cause, they had been undisturbed during this interview.

The hours seemed freighted with Mercury's wings; there was so much to be said by each. And yet, as is often true in such cases, there were lapses into prolonged silence, words apparently being inadequate to express the feelings of either. Mary's great joy was mingled with sadness, for John was thin and emaciated from suffering and exposure. Besides, he seemed to feel a restraint in her presence that she had never before noticed.

Just before she left she asked about Helene;

the question had been uppermost since her entrance. A peculiar dread of his reply was mingled with the curiosity which prompted the query. He answered rather shortly that he had no definite knowledge of Helene's whereabouts; that he had heard she was lately in the South.

"Where and how is James De Lancey?" asked Mary, quick to observe the change in John's features and tone.

"He's been stationed more or less in the Southern colonies, too. I hear they are married."

"Who?" and the visitor turned pale.

"Why, Helene and he," and John tried to assume a matter-of-fact air.

"*They* married!" and Mary's ejaculation was in a key that John could not understand.

"Why, I heard——" she blushed and looked at him helplessly.

"You knew he always loved her, didn't you?"

"Yes, but you—why, I——" Miss Clarkson was seldom so little mistress of her emotions.

John smiled. To the only spectator the smile was a revelation; a mixture of tenderness and kindness utterly foreign to the thoughtless lad of old. However, it was not the only alien part of her former companion.

She sighed and her beautiful eyes filled with tears as this thought came, and she looked on the

beloved face, so worn, so aged, and so drawn with the cruel lines traced by the fingers of care and want.

“There is much about us, Mary, my girl, that I am afraid you have not heard, or having heard, find it somewhat distorted.”

“Perhaps this news is distorted.”

“Hardly. I had it from De Lancey himself.”

“Then they have been married some time?”

“I don’t know. They were only betrothed when I saw him. But he said the marriage was to take place soon. That was nearly a year ago. I hope he makes her happy, but he is woefully unworthy of her.”

“I always liked James De Lancey,” Mary could not refrain from saying.

“And I always hated him,” echoed John, “but he had a way that took with the women.”

Mary saw his lips compress tightly and divined that in his secret soul another besides De Lancey was not held blameless.

“You ever liked him and so did she. It’s rather strange.”

Mary wondered what was strange; when, striving to conceal his bitterness, in a lighter vein he observed:

“I’ve heard the name of a dear little companion of mine coupled with General Cranmer’s of late.”

He noticed her color mount. How beautiful she looked. She had flushed sometimes like that for him. Had he still the power? He was possessed with an altogether human desire to try to exert it, but this time he dismissed the thought as an unworthy one.

"He is a soldier, and a gentleman, Mary," he said.

"And a true friend," said she. "As such I accept your opinion with pleasure, for it was kindly meant, John." But her voice trembled on the verge of tears.

Like many other men, John's heart was often more in evidence than his discretion, especially when there was a woman in the case.

"But I don't think even he is worthy of the beautiful creature he has won," murmured John, softly. "Mary, my dear, dear girl, I wish you all the joy in the world, for you are more angel than woman," and he took her long, slim fingers in his own.

How soft and white they were! When had he been permitted to touch a hand like this before? Somehow he felt very near to Mary then. And here was this exquisite flower of womanhood, which he knew and felt that once he might have plucked and called his own, inhaling its beauty and fragrance and purity. Instead he had chosen

to lose it in the pursuit of the *ignis fatuus* of a pair of dark eyes that bespoke a coquette's soul.

"Mary," he spoke very slowly and tenderly, "you know I am sincere."

She withdrew her hand.

"I may as well be sincere, too, John. General Cranmer has not won me and—never shall."

"Mary!" She raised her eyes at the tone, so thrilling and new. How it reverberated through her soul. Had it really come at last—the hour for which her lonely soul had cried aloud in anguish through all these weary years? She did not stop to consider then—how could she at such a moment? But the thought came often later—that it might be the utter loneliness felt at that instant, or the mere beauty and sweetness of her near presence, or, worse still, a heart already bruised and bleeding by the cruel pressure of another hand, that made the man within him cry aloud for a taste of the pleasures erstwhile denied him.

She dropped her eyes hastily, afraid even to look at the features so well beloved.

"Mary, darling!" she heard as if the wind sighed.

A step sounded in the corridor and a knock came.

"The time is up. I must enter."

Heaven seemed snatched away.

"One moment!" said John. And he drew her face to his and kissed her on the lips.

That had been all, but Mary had treasured the honeyed sweetness of those few moments through the vicissitudes and ennui of the three long years that followed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECONCILIATION.

JOHN NORRIS in his secret soul felt humbled. Had he, after all, really been as sincere as he had wished Mary to believe? Certain it was he revered her as a being set apart from the rest of her kind—had he not always loved her? But then a face, less classic, less artistic, but oh, so alluring, would rise, and he would see again the eyes, now mocking, now tender, and the strong man would groan aloud in anguish.

Was she really married to De Lancey? he wondered; and then he would clench his fists till the nails cut into the flesh, for he could remember her as she lay unconscious in his arms on that dreadful night when he had rescued her. Could she change so? If love-light ever shone from Heaven, it had then gleamed in the luminous depths of her eyes, the windows of her pure spirit. Why had she married? And De Lancey of all

men! How he hated his insolence, his arrogance, his calm assumptions of superiority. And this was his successful rival!

These bitter reflections accompanied him often of late. Whenever he was alone, away from the tumult of battle, they were his constant and harassing companions.

They seemed to re-occur with particular and persistent vividness, one night months after his visit from Mary. He had again been exchanged, and was now on duty at a fort not far from the main army of the enemy. It was a dangerous position for the little patriot corps, and John was alert and vigilant. The proper sentinel had been taken ill, so John had relieved him.

Sleepy and fatigued he passed up and down, up and down, when suddenly he shouldered his musket.

“Who goes there?”

“A patriot!”

“Countersign.”

“Helene, so please your worship. I’m on horseback or I’d curtsey. I didn’t expect to see our gallant captain doing sentinel duty.”

“Helene! Helene!” he called wildly. “You were in my thoughts this moment! You are always——”

“It must be a rare occurrence. Still, a captain

has many things to think of, I presume. Monsieur, I am flattered to think that for but one little moment—I believed my very existence had been forgotten—thou art stancher than most—”

Her tones seemed bitter, and smote upon his ear harshly.

“Art surprised to see me?” she asked lightly.

“No,” he replied gravely, “though for years I have been denied a glimpse of your face. I felt that we *must* meet soon. Where bravery and unselfish heroism are required there I always look for you. Helene, did you come to see me, or—” He suddenly remembered that she belonged now to another.

“No time for flattery, sir, so I’ll tell the truth contrary to custom. Indeed I didn’t. The red-coats are seven miles away, expecting to surprise you at midnight. They are five thousand strong.”

John sounded the alarm.

“You’ll stay with us, Helene, of course. You can’t go now.”

“O, I must, John—Captain John, I mean. ‘*Je vous demande pardon, monsieur.*’ I came up with the enemy,” she concluded with a gay little laugh, and a flicker of her whip in the air.

“Oh, Helene, you little madcap! They’ll kill you yet! I shan’t let you go!”

“I expect they will, captain mine. I almost

hope they do," she added, half under her breath, but he heard and drew nearer.

"Helene!" he pleaded, tenderly. What cared he for De Lancy now? "Take care of yourself for *my* sake. I've heard all that has happened, and, God knows, I can't blame you, though I've wished to. But you don't know, Helene, how much I have always loved——"

"John!" she called in a threatening tone. "Don't say anything you'll be sorry for to-morrow. I know a great deal more than you give me credit for, sir. Do you think I care so little, John, in spite of all, that I do not know what *you* have been doing? Blame *me*! Look to yourself first, John, though I admit I've not been altogether in the right. But I believed in you implicitly until I heard—oh, what am I saying? I'm very happy, John, and just as gay and merry as ever. I've been in the South flirting with French and English alike. Had you not heard? Strange! Good news travels quickly in these days. But I must be off. Fort Madison is threatened too, and it's more important than this."

"Then why did you come here first?"

"Why? Perhaps I thought of a big country boy who scowled at me and taught me manners on the Common; or perchance of a man, the most blessed in the universe, who saved poor worthless

me one awful night now years ago; or——” with a shrug, “maybe I gave one stray thought to a girl who helped me to escape for the love of that same man. Take any or all of these reasons, John, or none of them. Life’s a queer little web, my friend. I thought I had spun a beautiful pattern, only to find myself caught up in its meshes. I can’t get out myself, and the only one who might help me has—been caught in his own, I fear. But I would rather suffer for him than live in paradise with any other. Tell him that, John! Good-bye!”

And before he had time to understand her words or realize her departure she was half a mile away.

The men coming out found him gazing down the road, vacantly.

“Have you seen an apparition, Captain Norris?” asked his aide.

“Yes,” he replied, soberly, without moving.

“From heaven, I hope?” said the other, smiling.

“Yes, from heaven,” he replied, slowly, “but it has doomed me to hell.”

Over and over again he would think of Helene’s words. Over and over again he would blame himself for having lost the opportunity of finding out the truth. Perhaps, after all, she had not been married. In these perilous times many things

may have prevented. Some of her statements seemed to imply as much. But then, had she not said that she had spun her web and been caught in its meshes? That could have but one meaning. Oh, if he had but certainty!

These ideas and desires came to him with such a feverish intensity, on the eve of an expected battle, the last great one in which John fought before peace was declared, that they brought again to his memory the last occasion when Helene had suddenly revealed herself. There was much similarity in these occurrences.

"I may be about to see her again," he mused. "I am actually growing superstitious. Just because I find myself thinking of her so often. As if she were not always in my thoughts. At any rate, she is not far away!"

John tossed restlessly during the night. A presentiment, such as comes to the sanest man at times, warned him of impending disaster. Death! He had faced it often in various forms and phases. Of it he had little fear. He had courted it, indeed, by his reckless daring, until General Willett had warned him he would soon be a suicide. This had made him pause, for while death for his country would be glorious, death of his own volition seemed cowardly.

Then, too, his own glimpse of Mary and its

consequences, made him feel dimly that his life was now hardly his own.

He was up before sunrise, aiding the men, smiling and jesting in a grim way, quite unusual. He was not under General Willett here, having been sent to this fort with a message, and finding himself unable to return to his own regiment. However, he was well known to many.

"What's up, Norris? I've never seen you like this before?" asked O'Neill, an old comrade.

"No, and probably never will again," he answered. "We're to have a great fight to-day, old man."

"Yes," remarked the other, wondering, for he well knew John's bravery.

"It may seem queer, Tom," observed John, laconically, "but I'd stake my life that something unlooked-for will happen to-day."

"That's good news," answered Tom, cheerily. "We're going to win, I suppose."

"If I die," continued John, "send everything, which won't be much, to Paulus Hook. I've carried around a letter to my father for over five years. Be sure that reaches him, Tom. These two pictures, both women, as you see, I want buried with me."

"Two! And both young and pretty! Isn't

that one more than most men have?" he asked, in a well-simulated effort at lightness.

"Yes, and two more than most men need," was John's prompt reply.

It was, indeed, a great battle. While the little band of patriots was outnumbered two to one, they occupied a place of vantage on top of a well-protected hill. This enabled them to hold their own for some time. From the valleys and plains surrounding, like bees around sugar, poured in the opposing hosts. Steadily the red-coats gained and slowly the little band was forced to retreat. All seemed lost, when suddenly the cry arose:

"They come! They come!"

"Who come, friend or foe?" cried John, in an agony of apprehension.

A great glad cry arose. It was part of Willett's army. Now it was the time for the British to falter. Their ranks broke slightly. A terrific onslaught followed. All at once rang a familiar voice in John's ears:

"Come on, my men! The day is ours!" and De Lancey, captain of one of the incoming regiments, swooped down upon the English like a famished eagle.

"Curse him!" almost rose to John's lips; when hatred for the man was lost in admiration for the commander. John was forced to admit the

royal figure of the man who led, in spite of torn and stained garments which fitted none too well. And then the calm, collected bravery of the man! Never excited, never moyed, the same bowing over a lady's glove or leading his little band to death.

"So he's captain, too! He deserves to be general," were his rival's thoughts, as he saw De Lancey lead his men in one of the rashest attacks known in history. They met with a fierce repulse.

Then John looked toward his general. His tense, white features told of the failure in view. He nodded to John.

"Shall I try?"

"Yes, in God's name," he answered.

And the next instant, side by side, Norris and De Lancey fought. As the latter saw John, he started, half nodded, shrugged his shoulders, as he saw the other frown, and smiled his old satirical smile.

Down like grapes in a hail storm fell the men around them.

"Oh, this is butchery!" cried John. "My God! There goes poor Tom O'Neill," with just a backward glance at his fallen comrade and a final wave of his hand:

"I have no pictures, captain," he railed. Then with a dying gasp, "God bless the flag!"

"Amen," said John. "And God bless you for a faithful friend."

They made another desperate charge. Backward they came. John's horse was shot from under him.

"Here!" cried a voice, and a fresh charger was beside him.

"No, thank you," John refused, for he recognized De Lancey's horse.

"Fool!" was the latter's comment.

"Get Captain Norris a horse," he commanded.

And John submitted with better grace. Truth to tell, he had been touched by De Lancey's offer, but false pride had prevented his showing it.

Then a cry arose. "Who'll plant our colors on the hill?"

Every eye looked in one direction. The man who carried the flag up there went to meet his Judge. Again the cry arose.

"Who'll plant our colors?"

John and De Lancey looked at each other. The eyes of both told the same story. "I will, but for her sake."

But before either had spoken came an exultant, "I will!"

The two men turned as if shot.

"Helene!" they called, simultaneously.

With a wave of the flag and a smile to the

two whom she saw and recognized, amid a perfect shower of rockets and bombs and shot, she started.

Both men started after without orders, but were peremptorily ordered back. De Lancey appeared cool and unperturbed as he obeyed, but his eyes were riveted on the slim little figure.

“She has gained it!” cried the men in chorus.

“Three cheers for our flag!” and a grateful shout went up.

“I *must* go, general,” cried John. “I’m here without orders.”

“You are under mine, Captain Norris. I forbid you. Good leaders are too scarce. You can’t help her.”

“Here she comes!” And a huzza went up.

“My God in heaven!” the general heard John say. He saw the little black-clad figure sway. Then:

“By the great Jehovah!” cried the general. “If he hasn’t gone contrary to orders.”

And so he had. He gained her just as she was about to fall, grasped her waist as if she were a child, and carried her back.

“General,” he shouted, “I’m sorry,” for he saw the look on his officer’s face. “But if I die for it, I couldn’t help it. I love her.”

The general looked at him a moment, and then

at the unconscious figure of the girl. Without a word he turned away and ordered another attack.

The cost was dreadful, but the victory was complete. John carried Helene over to De Lancey.

"I have saved her—for you," he said, bitterly. "That is, if she ever comes to. I didn't know I could be so generous. I wish we had died there together with the flag over our heads."

"And I give her to you," answered De Lancey coolly. "It's no fault of mine that I'm here alive, Norris. Life is not all wine and honey."

The girl's eyelids began to flutter with a stir of life within. Both men were busy mopping away the blood from an ugly bullet hole in the breast, and pouring cold water over her. Her bosom heaved twice, and the great dark orbs slowly opened. A cold stare met each feverish glance that rested upon her. Then a dawn of recognition came. She turned from De Lancey to Norris.

"John," she murmured, as her little dark fingers clasped his, "at last!"

John heard the man beside him draw a quick breath inwards, like the sharp cruel cut of the surgeon's knife. John felt a sense of triumph and happiness never before experienced. Married or single, living or dying, she belonged to him and

to him only. He looked across at the white face opposite, and his conscience smote him.

"Is she your wife?" he asked a little more gently, for he felt the kinship of suffering. De Lancey rose and turned away.

"It looks like it, doesn't it?" he remarked with a shrug.

Helene lay between life and death for some time, but her love for life, the new-born life with an ineffable love always near, triumphed.

Those were happy days. The face of heaven was radiated over the green sward of earth. Love was life and life was love.

Norris learned all then. She had heard that John had gone to New York, seen Mary Clarkson some time later, and married her there. A British officer had told De Lancey so.

She had heard the rumor confirmed, and finally believed it. Then, partly through pique, and partly from a sincere regard and true friendship for De Lancey, and also from pity for his great love for her, she had promised him her hand.

But as the months wore away, and he became importunate, she felt how cruel she was to herself as well as to him. Finally, with a great effort she told De Lancey all. And he accepted her decision, "as a captain and a gentleman."

"I cannot think he has been guilty of any base-

ness," concluded Helene. "I know what it has cost him to take care of me all this time in the way he has done. I saw him offer you his own horse, and how ungracefully you refused it, John."

"Disgracefully," said John. He could afford to be magnanimous now.

So he sought out De Lancey.

"I have come to ask your pardon, captain," he said. "Helene has told me all, and—you've been very generous, indeed."

For the first time John saw a blush mount the other's cheek. A fight was going on within. But the proffered hand was empty.

"I can do no more," said John. "I know I've wronged you. Let me make what amends lie in my power."

"Amends!" and the other's sneer was fine. "No, John, no. I cannot take your hand for—I have—lied—to you. Lied to you—and to her," he added with scorn.

"She says otherwise," remarked Norris.

"What I told her was true—so far as it went. I had heard these rumors, but in my own heart I did not credit them. I measured your love by my own. It admitted no thought of any other woman."

John moved uneasily, and felt a cold perspiration stand out on his forehead.

"Then, too, I knew she liked you better. But—well, you love her yourself, you know how it was. She did promise to marry me, but as the months went around I saw how troubled and dissatisfied she was. Finally I could bear it no longer. It was killing me to see her so. I brought matters to a focus and learned the truth. She broke down utterly. Women like her love once and always.

"She told me then she had done me wrong, was not worthy of me. *She* not worthy of *me*. She who, amid all the vices of the enemy's camp and the poverty of our own, has kept her purity as spotless as a lily on the altar of God. I couldn't stand that, John. So I told her all I knew, bade her bear up, and promised a brother's help. You know what that meant to me, John Norris. *Me*, with the hot blood of the South flowing in every vein. But, by the Lord! I have kept my word to the letter, and to the spirit.

"Now, you see why I do not take your hand. Personally, John," and his voice broke a trifle, "I bear you no malice. I have ever liked you, even when you hated me."

"And I bear you no malice, De Lancey. But, from my heart I thank you for your forbearance with me and your blessed kindness to her. She is very ill. She may never recover, and even

though she does she cannot be hale and well again."

He trusted himself to say no more, for he found his voice quivering.

The two hands met in one strong grasp. Many saw the reconciliation, but few realized the deeper meaning of the bowed heads and clasped hands.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE WEEK LATER.

AFTER the surrender of Cornwallis Mary hoped that John would return home, but she heard with a sinking heart that Willett was expected to remain in active service; and as New York remained in the hands of the British, it was not until December, 1783, that John finally returned to Paulus Hook. He was much surprised to see his father so feeble and changed, and the meeting between them was extremely touching. Mary was the only observer. After mutual forgiveness had been obtained the old man turned to her.

"You have succeeded where I failed," he said to John, "and while our country is in a deplorable condition now, centuries hence I prophesy that it will become second only to Great Britain. You know my wish, boy. It remains with you to make Mary really my daughter. Next to you, she is all I have on earth. Will you, John?"

But Mary spoke. "Dear father, will you let us come to a private understanding first?"

The old man smiled sagely and left the room.

"What do you mean, Mary?" John asked. "My father's wish is mine."

"Is it, John? Answer me truly, for life is a serious thing. Don't you love Helene?"

"She is dead, Mary."

"Oh!" and she drew a quick breath inwards. Then very softly she asked:

"When?"

"One week since. She was wounded some time ago. We had hoped that she would recover, but she had a relapse. I'll tell you all about it some other time." He put his hand over his face to shield it from the blaze. Mary went over to him gently.

"She was brave and noble and beautiful, John," she said. "I do not wonder that you loved her."

"Always my dear, good Mary," was his reply, as he stood and kissed her.

After she left him he sat by the fire and dreamed. Was he sleeping or waking? He hardly knew. Back to his memory came the thrilling experience of the past week. Again he was in Fraunces' Tavern. It was the day on which the beloved commander-in-chief was to bid farewell

to his officers. The principal leaders had gathered in the Long Room, prior to Washington's entrance. As General Willett passed John, he smiled.

"I am sorry you are not with me," he said kindly. "You deserve to be."

At which remark, Washington, who had arrived at that moment, spoke with the tenderness of a father:

"If he deserves to be with you, General Willett, let him come. Captain Norris, we owe you much."

And John feels again a thrill of pride and happiness, and he sees once more the solemn faces of the officers, and hears the beautiful address of the great leader. The tears were streaming down their cheeks as he followed the silent party to the barge, and saw Washington off for Paulus Hook en route to his home in Mt. Vernon.

Then he remembers—oh, can he ever forget what followed? His return to the Tavern, his talk with General Willett, and, as they were conversing, the sounds of drums and fifes and the shouts of men and women. Then he sees in the flames the triumphal entry of Helene. He hears the whisper that she has had a serious relapse, and he longs to clasp her fragile form in his strong arms, and to carry her away from this

worshipful crowd. Then comes the recollection of their toast.

“To Helene De Varnée Rockwood, the Angel of the Regiment!”

He sees her fling off her scarf, a soft, silky affair bearing the national colors, and beckon to him to come nearer.

“Make way for Captain Norris, please,” she says, smiling, “I want him beside me to-night.” Then she whispers as he draws closer: “It will be the last time, John,” and oh! the infinite tenderness of her look.

Even now the strong man groans.

“What do you mean, Helene, are you worse?” he asks, but she only smiles.

Then he hears the sound of General Willett’s voice.

“Another toast! To Captain John Norris, the brave soldier!”

He sees the quick flush of pride mount Helene’s cheek as she puts her hand on his. He forgets everything then, forgets the crowd, forgets the place, forgets even that she is ill.

“Another,” he cries. “To Helene Rockwood, the girl I love!”

She totters, and his powerful arms serve to support her. “Water,” she whispers. It is brought to her, but instead of drinking she springs

on a chair and rests one little hand on John's shoulder! A true daughter of sunny France!

"A last toast, my friends," she calls, and her voice is trembling, but perfectly audible. "This times with fresh pure water, fresh from the hands of God."

Ah, he had forgotten, but she had not. For the loved voice rings out:

"A toast to Miss Mary Clarkson, the future bride of Captain Norris!"

Then the glass shatters into a hundred fragments, and he is conscious of a dead weight in his arms. He calls wildly; he implores, he entreats her to open her eyes and wake up. He feels her icy fingers loosen their clasp, and through the old tavern rings an awful cry of anguish.

Then the dark eyes, beautiful with the spiritual radiance of another world, slowly open, and a voice like an echo faintly calls:

"I—am—happier—so—sleeping."



